



## **Primary and Secondary Resources on Civilization - Modified Version**

This collection of sources chronicles the actions and policies of the United States toward Indian Nations following the Revolution. It begins with a brief overview by Dr. Jamie Mize, written for the National Parks Service in 2017, detailing these policies, which today we collectively refer to as the Plan of Civilization. It is followed by a collection of primary sources and images from 1783 through 1827, concluding with excerpts from the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, 1827.

These sources have been modified and/or edited for length for easier reading comprehension.



## The U.S. Government imposes a "civilization" plan - Original Text

By Jaime Mize, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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After the American Revolution, the new United States government created a "civilization" policy that it promoted among Indian groups. The goal of "civilization" was to force Cherokees and other Indians away from their traditional **occupations** of hunting and warfare into livelihoods that resembled those of white citizens and settlers, such as farming.... The government's desire to make Cherokee men farmers [was] **problematic**. The Cherokees did not need to learn how to farm, as the prime occupation of a Cherokee woman was indeed agriculture. To avoid a loss of manhood associated with doing women's work, some Cherokees farmed with slaves on plantations. Others raised livestock on smaller farmsteads. Either way, Cherokees that embraced "civilization" **resided** in dwellings (*homes*) that resembled those of white settlers...

...

Women, children, and the elderly experienced threats and acts of violence .... The Cherokees endured these offenses in hopes of demonstrating their **fidelity** to the United States government. Cherokees believed that a violent response to the attacks on their home front would only result in greater destruction for their Nation.

The destruction of the Cherokee home front during the Creek War proved one of the strongest indications that... even success within the government's "civilization" policy would not matter. ... (T)he Cherokee embrace of "civilization" proved of little importance in the face of continued and mounting pressure for land by white, western settlers.

*Occupations:* Jobs, or ways of making a living

*Problematic:* Causing a problem or difficulty

*Resided:* Lived in

*Fidelity:* Loyalty



## Letter from the Chickasaw Nation to the United States, 1783

*Following the American Revolution, relations between the new United States and Indian Nations were uncertain. Individual states began negotiating with Indian Nations on their own. Indian leaders did not know exactly who had the authority to negotiate with them. To try to clear things up, leaders of the Chickasaw wrote the letter below to the United States government.*

Friend & Brother,

This is the first talk we ever sent you – we hope it will not be the last. We **desire** you to open your ears to hear, and your heart to understand us, as we shall always be ready to do to your talks...

When our great father the King of England called away his warriors, he told us to take your people by the hand, as friends and brothers. Our hearts [always wanted] to do so ... as our Brothers the Virginians can testify...

Notwithstanding...we are yet in confusion and uncertainty. The Spaniards are sending talks amongst us, and inviting our young men to trade with them. We also receive talks from the Governor of Georgia [saying the same things] – We have [also] had speeches from the Illinois [Nation] inviting us to trade with them

Our Brothers the Virginians [asked us to make] a treaty, and want part of our land, and we expect... [they] will in a little time demand, if not forcibly take part of it from us, also as we have been **informed** they have been marking lines through our hunting grounds...

Why have we not had talks from you[?] We are head men and Chiefs, and Warriors also, and have always been accustomed to speak with Great Chiefs and Warriors...and therefore we wish to Speak with you and your Council.

Done at Chuck-ul-issah our Great Town the 28th day of July, 1783.

Minghoma  
Pyamathahaw  
Kushthaputhasa  
Pyamingoe of Christhaura  
Pyamingo of Chuckaferah

*Desire:* A strong feeling of wanting something to happen.

*Informed:* To be told something or provided with information.



## Letter from George Washington to James Duane, 1783

*At the end of the Revolutionary War, George Washington wrote to James Duane. Duane was the leader of the committee on Indian Affairs for Congress. Duane's report was finished in October of 1783. His report was based heavily on Washington's letter. Below is some of the letter Washington wrote.*

I have carefully [read] the Papers which you put into my hands relating to Indian Affairs.

...To **suffer** a wide extended Country to be overrun with [people looking for land to buy and sell] or even with scattered settlers is, in my opinion, [not a good idea]...

My ideas ... are simply these.

First ... that all prisoners [taken during the Revolutionary War] of whatever age or sex, [should be returned to] the Indians..

That the Indians should be informed, that...Britain has **ceded** all the lands of the United States [to us]...

As the Country is large enough to contain us all; and as we are *disposed* to be kind to them and to partake of their trade, we will ... establish a boundary line between them and us beyond which we will **endeavor** to [keep] our People from Hunting or Settling...

In establishing this line... care should be taken [not to take] too much. But to **endeavor** to [show the Indians ... the generosity of our [desire] to **accommodate** them...

*Suffer:* Allow or permit

*Ceded:* Given or handed over the rights to something

*Disposed:* Willing or interested in doing something

*Endeavor:* Try to accomplish

*Accommodate:* Make room for or give in to another person's wishes.



## Treaty with the Cherokee, 1785

*The following is a list of agreements contained in a treaty signed by the Cherokee people and the United States in 1785. The treaty was meant to end fighting between the Cherokees and the U.S. government and to define the land the Cherokee owned and controlled.*

THE Commissioners of the United States ... give peace to all the CHEROKEES, and receive them into the favor and protection of the United States of America, on the following conditions.

Art. 1. The Head-Men and Warriors of all the Cherokees, shall [return] all the prisoners [that are] citizens of the United States...

Art. 2. ... [The] United States shall [return] all the prisoners taken from the Indians...

Art. 3. The Indians ... acknowledge all the Cherokees [are] under the protection of the United States of America...

...

Art. 5. If any citizen of the United States... shall attempt to settle on any of the lands [belonging to] the Indians for their hunting grounds ... the Indians may punish him or not as they please...

Art. 6. If any Indian or Indians... shall commit a robbery, or murder or other capital crime on any citizen of the United States... the tribe to which such offender or offenders may belong, shall... deliver him or them up to be punished according to the [laws] of the United States...

Art. 7. If any citizen of the United States, or person under their protection, shall commit a robbery or murder or other capital crime, on any Indian, such offender or offenders shall be punished in the same manner as if the murder or robbery or other capital crime, had been committed on a citizen of the United States; and the punishment shall be in presence of some of the Cherokees...

Art. 9. ...The United States shall have the sole and exclusive right of **regulating** the trade with the Indians, and managing all their affairs in such manners as they think proper.

*Acknowledge:* Admit or agree to.

*Regulating:* Controlling or guiding.



## Ordinance Governing Relations between the United States and Indian Nations, Congress of the United States, 1786

*In August 1786, the Confederation Congress passed a law to set up a new organization for running the relationship with Indian Nations. Below are some excerpts from this law.*

WHEREAS the safety and **tranquility** of the frontiers of the United States ... depend on the maintaining a good [relationship] between their citizens and the several nations of Indians in amity\* with them...

[T]he Indian department [should] be divided into three districts...that a superintendent be appointed for each of the districts... The superintendents shall [enforce] regulations as Congress shall from time to time establish, respecting Indian affairs. They shall have authority to [give] licenses to traders.

[The] superintendents shall regularly correspond with the Secretary [of] War... [Anything] which Congress may think necessary for the support of, or for presents to the Indians, shall be under the control of the superintendents...

And that [no one] but citizens of the United States shall be ... allowed to trade with any nation of Indians within the territory of the United States...

*Tranquility:* Peacefulness

*Amity:* Friendly relations



## Report to Congress, 1786

*In October, 1786, a committee in the U.S. Congress came to believe that several groups of Native Americans were preparing for war. Because of that, the committee asked Congress to send additional soldiers to the frontier. Here are some parts of the Committee's request to Congress.*

OCTOBER 20, 1786

The Committee consisting of Mr. Pettit, Mr. Lee, Mr. Pinckney, Mr. Henry and Mr. Smith, to whom was referred the Letter from the War Office... containing intelligence of the hostile intentions of the Indians in the Western Country [reports]:

THAT the ... intelligence from the Western Country plainly indicates the hostility of a number of Indian nations, particularly the Shawanese, Puteotamies, Chippewas, Tawas and Twightwees.

That these nations are now [gathering] in the Shawanese towns, and are joined by [some] who are outcasts from other nations, and who have ... settled in that country for the purpose of war and plunder.

That they are [trying] to draw in other nations to unite with them in a war with the Americans....

There is the strongest reason to believe that, unless [we act quickly to stop it], war will spread...

The committee therefore [thinks it is] highly necessary that the troops in the service of the United States be immediately [increased]...



## Letter to President George Washington from Secretary of War Henry Knox, 1790

*During the 1780s, the Iroquois Six Nations had suffered with mistreatment from the United States and its citizens. Afraid of war with the powerful Iroquois, George Washington sent a committee to hear the Iroquois' concerns. He also asked them to introduce the idea that the Iroquois should take on European customs and manners as a way to ease tensions. Below are parts of a letter that the Secretary of War Henry Knox wrote to George Washington about the meetings with the Iroquois.*

It ought not to be **concealed** in this place that Cornplanter is not a **sachem**, but the principal warrior of the Senecas (One of the six nations of the Iroquois). An Indian by the name of the Farmer's Brother is the Principal Sachem and another by the name of Red Jacket and a third by the name of the Big Tree... but the Farmer's Brother ... has ... lost in a great degree his influence—Red Jacket and Big Tree have neither the talents nor influence of Cornplanter.

[I think] that Cornplanter's [loyalty to us] should be rewarded and his future services secured by an annual [payment] in money ... animals and farming utensils...

...Cornplanter has [shown] his willingness to [gather] some other Chiefs, and go with them to the ... tribes upon the Wabash [river] and persuade them to peace.

...Nothing would more contribute to the reputation of the [U.S.] government than an attempt to **impart** the blessings of civilization to the Indian tribes instead of [exterminating] them ... [civilization], should be encouraged...

*Concealed:* Hidden or kept secret.

*Sachem:* The title of Iroquois leaders.

*Impart:* To give something to another



### Silver Peace Medal, 1793 and Canandaigua Treaty Belt, 1794

*As the United States made treaties with Indian Nations, they knew that, for Indian peoples, traditional gift giving practices were important to finalize the agreements. Peace Medals made of silver provided a European style gift. These were made in three sizes to match levels of office held by the Indigenous leader to which they were gifted. Many times though, the U.S. used traditionally Indian gifts, such as the wampum belt below commissioned by George Washington for a treaty between the United States and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois).*





## Civilization Fund Act, 1819

*Following the War of 1812, many U.S. leaders were frustrated with what they saw as lack of progress toward their goal of making Indian people follow more European ways of life. In an attempt to speed up the process they called “civilization,” Congress passed the Civilization Fund Act. Below are some parts of this law.*

An act making provision for the civilization of the Indian tribes **adjoining** the frontier settlements.

[F]or the purpose of providing against the further decline and final extinction of the Indian tribes... and for introducing among them the habits and arts of civilization, the President of the United States [is] authorized... to employ capable persons of good moral character, to instruct [Indian peoples] in... agriculture suited to their situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic...

[T]he annual sum of ten thousand dollars be, [is] **appropriated**, for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this act; and an account of the [spending] of the money... shall be [made] annually before Congress.

APPROVED, March 3, 1819.

*Adjoining:* Next to or alongside of.

*Appropriated:* Set aside or saved for a special purpose.



## Benjamin Hawkins and the Creek Indians, 1805

*Benjamin Hawkins was a missionary who was appointed the primary Indian Agent to the Creeks, responsible for carrying out the civilization program through education and distribution of agricultural tools and goods.*



*Benjamin Hawkins and the Creek Indians, 1805, Artist Unknown*



## Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, 1827

*As tensions with the United States grew during the late 1800s, leaders in the Cherokee nation such as John Ross, came to believe that they would be more successful in dealing with the U.S. Government if the Americans saw more of themselves in the Cherokee way of life. By 1827, for the most part, the Cherokee lived much like the whites around them: speaking English, practicing Christianity, and doing plantation agriculture. To further prove their level of civilization, they adopted a national constitution modeled on the U.S. Constitution. Below are some excerpts from that constitution adopted in 1827.*

"We the Representatives of the people of the Cherokee Nation ... in order to establish justice, ensure tranquility, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our **posterity** the blessings of liberty, acknowledging with humility and gratitude the goodness of the ... ruler of the Universe [giving us [this] opportunity ... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Government of the Cherokee Nation.

The boundaries of this nation [are] guaranteed and reserved forever to the Cherokee Nation by the treaties concluded with the United States ...

The power of this Government shall be divided into three distinct departments, the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial...

The Legislative power shall be **vested** in two distinct branches, a Committee and a Council each to have a [overriding vote] on the other, and both to be [called] the General Council of the Cherokee nation...

All free male citizens (excepting negroes and descendants of white & Indian men by Negro women who may have been set free) ... the age of 18 years shall be equally entitled to vote at all public elections...

The supreme executive power of this nation, shall be vested in a Principal Chief who shall be chosen by the General Council and shall hold his office four years...

The Judicial powers shall be vested in a Supreme Court, and such Circuit and **inferior** Courts...

*Posterity:* Future generations, or one's descendants.

*Vested:* Assigned to.

*Inferior:* Lower than or less important