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# The ‘Land Back’ Campaign: Oklahoma is only a start

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Last year the U.S. Supreme Court made a decision that affected 40% of Oklahoma. The court decided to uphold a 19th century treaty made with five Indigenous tribes of Oklahoma: Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee and Seminole. This was very significant for the five tribes.

Tulsa, the second biggest city in Oklahoma, sits on Creek land. So does the fourth biggest city, Broken Arrow. The ruling gives Native governments better protections over the citizens of each nation.

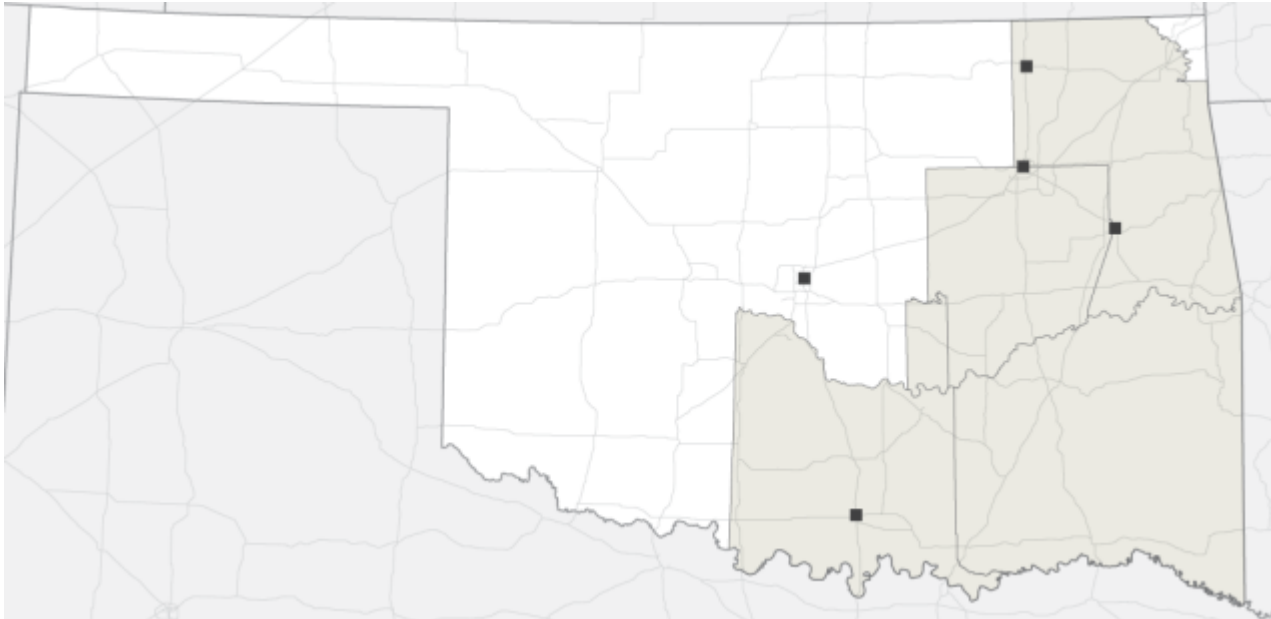
The state of Oklahoma no longer has the legal authority to prosecute cases involving Native Americans in territory previously owned by the state.

The Creek Nation released a statement that partly read: “Today’s decision will allow the Nation to honor our ancestors by maintaining our established sovereignty and territorial boundaries.”

The Supreme Court decision was 5-4, with Justices Neil Gorsuch, Sonia Sotomayor, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer in the majority, while Justices John Roberts, Brett Kavanaugh, Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas

dissented.

This was a good start for the [LANDBACK Campaign](#). The 40% of land is Eastern and expands to the South of Oklahoma.



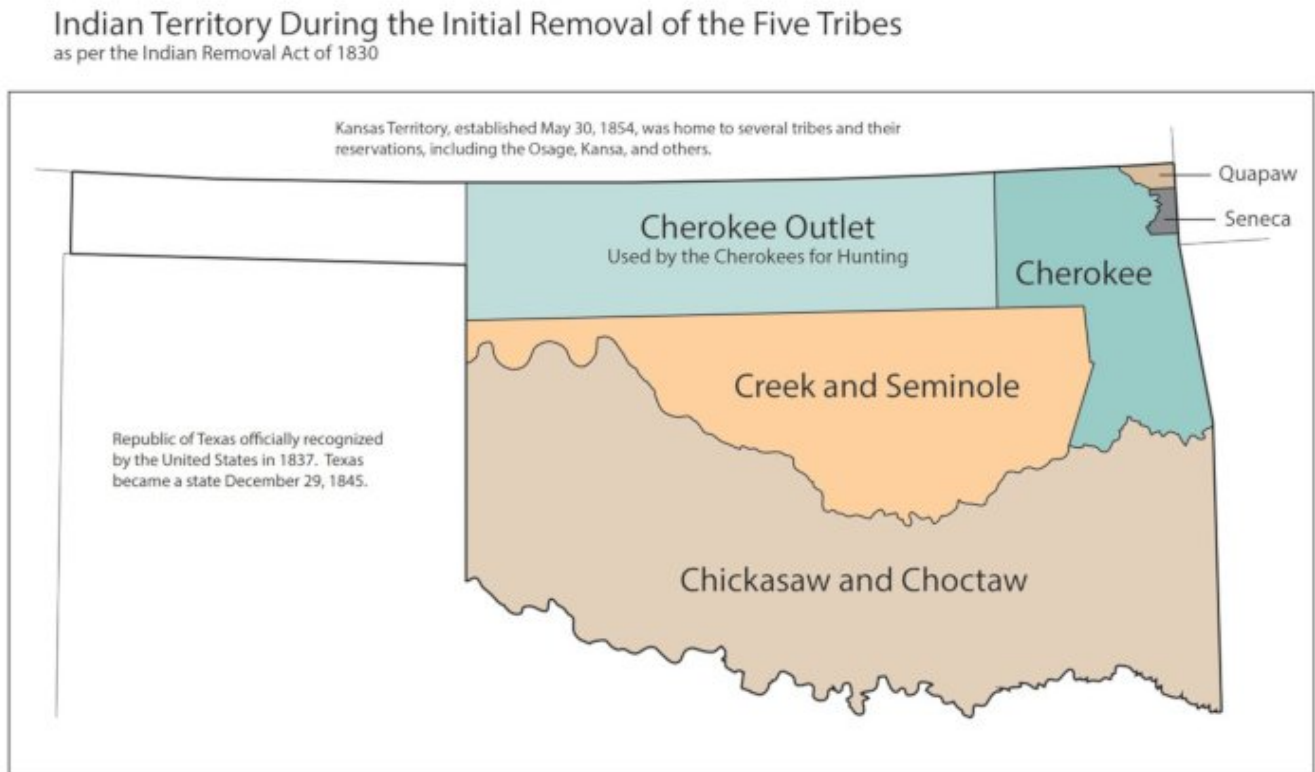
## Trail of Tears

The history of the five tribes is a sad one. The traditional lands of the tribes are Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. The Seminoles' homeland was as far as Florida.

The Trail of Tears was brutal and not all made it. They were colonized along the way. Most became farmers with crops of corn, beans and squash. Wild turkeys were also a food source.

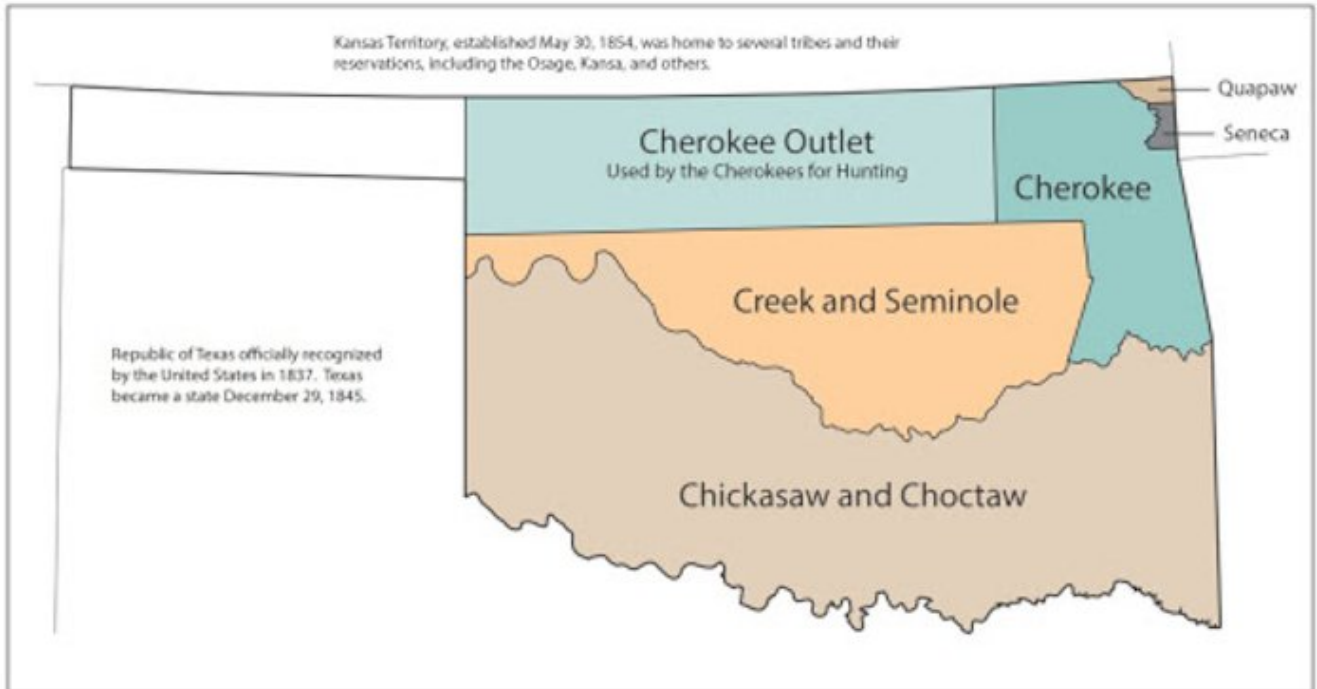
The colonial government quickly broke the treaty it had signed and the tribes were forced onto a small portion of what was promised. Other Native peoples already inhabited Oklahoma. The Wichita, Plains Apache, Quapaw and Caddo tribes were there during the colonization of the Spanish and French.

By the early 1800s the Osage, Pawnee, Kiowa, Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes migrated into “Indian Territory” — also known as Oklahoma. Tribes Native to present day Oklahoma are the Caddo, Osage and the Wichita.



Map of Indian Territory in 1830.

## Indian Territory During the Initial Removal of the Five Tribes as per the Indian Removal Act of 1830



Map of 1855.

This map illustrates the various land runs and tribal territories in Oklahoma Territory. Key features include:

- No Man's Land:** Attached to the Twin Territories via Organic Act of 1890.
- Cherokee Outlet:** Opened by Land Run on September 16, 1893.
- Cheyenne and Arapaho:** Opened by Land Run After Kickapoo on April 15, 1892.
- Unassigned Lands:** Opened by the First Land Run on April 22, 1889.
- Cherokee Nation:** Located in the northeast.
- Creek Nation:** Located in the east.
- Choctaw Nation:** Located in the southeast.
- Chickasaw Nation:** Located in the south.
- Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache:** Lands opened by Lottery After Kickapoo on July 5, 1891 - August 6, 1891.
- Grazing Lands:** Known later as "Big Pasture", lands opened by Sealed Bid on December 1906.
- Green County:** Claimed by Texas until 1896.
- Other Tribes:** Includes Kiowa, Osage, Shawnee, Seneca, and Chickasaw.

There is a “Land Back” movement building momentum. It’s beginning with the Black Hills and is trying to shut down the Mount Rushmore monument.

To quote the NDN Collective working on the LANDBACK Campaign: “South Dakota is our cornerstone battle, from which we will build out this campaign. Not only does Mount Rushmore sit in the heart of the sacred Black Hills, but it is an international symbol of white supremacy and colonization.”

The land that was given back to the five tribes is a good start, but we want all of our land back.

*Zola Fish is a member of the Choctaw Nation.*

