



# NORTHERN CHEROKEE NATION OF THE OLD LOUISIANA TERRITORY

*For over 275 years, Missouri, Arkansas and adjoining areas have been home for thousands of “Lost Cherokees”*

The Northern Cherokee Nation is the only tribe of Indians which is recognized by Proclamations and House Resolutions with the states of Missouri and Arkansas. We first received a Proclamation from then Governor, Kit Bond, of Missouri in 1983. A second Proclamation was awarded to our Nation when Governor Mel Carnahan renewed Missouri’s Proclamation to our Tribe on June 22, 1996. Arkansas recognition of our people came in 1997 with a House Concurrent Resolution on March 18 and a Proclamation from Governor Jim Huckabee on April 8, 1997.

In 1721 some of our forefathers began moving west of the Mississippi as English encroachers began taking away their eastern homelands along with their freedoms. During the time of French and Spanish occupation of the Louisiana Territory, many of our ancestors first settled in a five-county area in today’s Southeast Missouri and across Northern Arkansas. In time our kinsmen who remained in the East referred to us as the “Lost Cherokees”. (US Bur. Of Ethnology, 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Rpt., pp. 391 & 392)

By 1799, portions of what is now St. Charles, MO, were deeded to some of our Ancestors by Spanish land grants. Chief Beverly Baker, a seventh generation leader of our people, is a direct descendent of a

full-blood Cherokee who then owned land in “Green’s Bottoms” in St. Charles County. The Greens lived near Daniel Boone’s home.

After the “Louisiana Purchase” of 1803 many of our Cherokee forebears were forced from their properties by the US government. Some of these refugees migrated with other Cherokees to Booneslick Country which included areas of central, north-central, and western Missouri – north of the Missouri River.

In time, our people settled all over the western watershed of the Mississippi. Our forebears multiplied so that today we estimate our Northern Cherokee kinsmen number over a hundred thousand. Over 15,000 Cherokees identified themselves as such on the 1990 Missouri and Arkansas census. Several thousand have now stepped forward to join the nation of their roots, with more enrolling every day.

Because we have been dispersed throughout the former Louisiana Territory for many generations and due to the fact we have lived in this area since French and Spanish occupation, we now call our tribe **The Northern Cherokee Nation of the Old Louisiana Territory**. Our effort is to make our people aware that the nation and

government of their roots has continued to exist west of the Mississippi since 1721. We are eager for all Northern Cherokees to re-identify themselves with the nation of their forebears.

Twenty years before the “Trail of Tears” (November 2, 1819), John Ross wrote of our Nation in a letter to James Monroe, President of the United States. In the letter Ross referred to our people west of the Mississippi as: “the Cherokees on the St. Francis River (located in the present SE Missouri & NE Arkansas) who had moved there great many years before”. John Ross later became the Principal Chief of the Old Cherokee Nation in the Southeast.

It should be mentioned that the US government recognized our nation until the 1840s. Evidence of this includes the fact that several Indian agents were assigned to our forebears soon after the “Louisiana Purchase”. After setting up a Cherokee Reservation in Indian Territory, and after the forced migration (“Trail of Tears”) of 1838 and 1839, the US government apparently chose to ignore and/or forget our people. Our effort today is to recover that forgotten Federal Recognition of our Nation.

In 1825, just four years after statehood, Missouri passed legislation which outlawed American Indians from living in the State of Missouri. In order to keep from being forced to the Oklahoma reservation, many of our people dressed and behaved like the whites to conceal their identity. The many who chose to continue residing in Missouri had to maintain our Cherokee affairs and heritage in secret. Much suffering occurred during the eighty years these laws stayed on the books.

We remain proud of our Cherokee heritage and will not permit anyone to deny us our birthright, though many have tried to destroy our heritage in the past. From ancient times we have called ourselves, “Ani Yunwiya”, which means, “the Principal People”. American principles of social and political equality are only part of our ancient Cherokee Beauty Way. Without original Americans like the Cherokee, the world may never have learned the joy and prosperity that only liberty can bring.

For more information about our people, please read *Trail of Tears Across Missouri* by Joan Gilbert (University of MO Press). The completed history of the Northern Cherokee Nation of the Old Louisiana Territory, *We Are Not Yet Conquered*, written by Chief Beverly Baker, can be purchased through *The Northern Cherokee Nation of the Old Louisiana Territory* – PMB 242  
3305 Clark Lane  
Columbia, MO 65202  
and *The Cherokee Trails Store* –  
811 Broadway  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701.

*Revised 3/12/06*