

CHICKASAW  
*Heritage Series*



**MONTFORD  
JOHNSON**

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THE CHICKASAW RANCHER

E L E M E N T A R Y

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why is Montford Johnson considered an important figure to the Chickasaw Nation?
- Why is he considered important to the ranching industry?
- What are the key events that led to the development of “the ranch?”
- How is ranching important, not only to Oklahoma’s history but also to its current economy?



## LEARNING GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

- To recognize the significant contribution of Montford Johnson to the Chickasaw Nation and to the State of Oklahoma
- To determine the main events of the time that led to the development of the cattle ranch and to Montford Johnson’s success as a rancher (Land Rush, Civil War, etc.)
- To understand the importance of the cattle industry and to the development of “the ranch”

## BACKGROUND:

Montford Thomas Johnson (November 1843–February 17,1896) was Chickasaw and a cattleman who lived in Indian Territory, what is now the present-day state of Oklahoma. Johnson was a well-known and respected entrepreneur, noted for his successful ranching operation that spanned a large area of central Oklahoma, including parts of what would eventually become Oklahoma City.

Montford Johnson's father, Charles "Boggy" Johnson, was an English Shakespearean actor. Charles came to the United States with his brother when he was 19 years old and traveled throughout the South with a theater company. Charles met and married Chickasaw citizen Rebekah Courtney, Montford's mother. She was half Chickasaw and half Scottish. Rebekah and Charles migrated with the Chickasaw to Indian Territory during the tribe's forced removal from their Homeland in the late 1830s.

Montford was born in November 1843, about two years after his older sister, Adelaide. A few months after he was born, his mother became ill with pneumonia and died. Charles, distraught by his wife's passing, decided to take the children and return east. As it was customary for Chickasaw families to take in motherless children and raise them as their own, Charles' in-laws insisted the youngsters stay in Indian Territory. They were left in the care of their maternal grandmother Sallie Tarntubby and grew up learning Chickasaw traditions and farming. Montford and Adelaide both attended school. Adelaide was a student at Rock Academy, a boarding school for girls. Montford was sent to the Chickasaw Manual Labor Academy. There, he learned advanced farming techniques necessary to yield successful crops. He and Adelaide remained under the care of their grandmother until her death in 1858.

After a short courtship, Adelaide married Michael Campbell in fall 1859. Montford married Michael's sister Mary Elizabeth a few years later. By 1862, the "War Between the States" had entered Indian Territory. Chickasaw leaders declared the tribe independent of the United States and signed a treaty committing men and supplies to the South. Both young men signed up to serve the Confederate cause. By 1863, Montford and Michael had become fathers. Unfortunately, the Civil War was going badly for the South as Union armies advanced further and further into Indian Territory. When Michael died in a drowning accident in the summer of 1864, Montford did his best to provide for not only his own family, but Michael and Adelaide's as well.

With the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865, the Chickasaw Nation's infrastructure had been utterly decimated. The few Confederate dollars that Montford's family had been able to save were now worthless and crops were suffering from the effects of the worst drought to hit North America in 300 years. Facing these obstacles, Montford set about the business of building a cattle ranch. He secured agreements with neighboring farms to round up cattle that had been driven into the mountains during the war. Montford received a finder's fee for each branded cow he returned to its rightful owner. Any unbranded cattle would belong to him outright. While rounding up cattle, Montford used salt licks to

entice the animals to enter uniquely designed pen-traps. Once the cattle entered, the pen-trap would not allow them to escape. This method greatly increased the number of cattle Montford was able to corral with relatively little effort.

Around this time, Montford hosted his friend Jesse Chisholm on a buffalo hunt on the western prairie lands of Chickasaw territory, south of present-day Norman, Oklahoma. The area was largely undeveloped, and Montford thought it would be a perfect place to graze cattle. With Jesse's help, it was suggested Montford negotiate agreements with the tribes living there. Montford was able to successfully parley a deal that allowed him to use the land as long as he did not hire white men as ranch hands. Montford established his first ranch in the spring of 1868, taking a team of men to Walnut Creek, the same location of the buffalo hunt. Montford placed ranch hand Jack Brown in charge of the Walnut Creek Ranch. As payment for his services, Jack received every fourth calf born on the ranch. By fall 1869, Montford moved his family to a new homestead at the site of Camp Arbuckle. He farmed a 50-acre plot and used the practice of burning fields to rid the land of old growth, as well as prevent diseases, detract ticks and other harmful pests. Montford used the controlled burn method at all his ranches throughout the rest of his career as a rancher.

Montford's Camp Arbuckle homestead was in the vicinity of a settlement named for him - Johnsonville. By 1878, the settlement had become a bustling town with new people arriving daily. Montford, who had always loved the great open spaces of Indian Territory, started to feel crowded. So, when the opportunity presented itself, he worked out a trade with his friend Caddo Bill Williams, exchanging a number of livestock for Caddo Bills' ranch east of Snake Creek, near Old Silver City (just north of present-day Tuttle, Oklahoma). It was also at this time Adelaide married successful horseman and rancher Jim Bond. Adelaide and her new husband moved to Silver City as well. They built their home a couple of miles west of the Chisholm Trail on the southern bank of the South Canadian River. Their homestead location was a suitable place for crossing the river, and cattle drivers often stopped there for a good meal and to spend the night. In later life, Adelaide was widely respected for her hospitality, philanthropy and dedication to various educational programs for children in the Silver City/Tuttle area.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the Chisholm Trail was the main route to drive cattle over land from ranches in Texas to Kansas railheads. Unfortunately, the longhorn herds traveling along the trail brought ticks that carried a deadly disease known as "cattle fever." While the longhorns were immune, Montford's cattle were not. Montford's ranch locations brought his cattle close to the Texas drives, and he had difficulty keeping his herds separate and healthy. It wasn't until railroad lines replaced cattle trails in transporting cattle across Indian Territory that ranchers began to see a reduction in the number of herds infected with the disease.

In 1880, the future looked bright for Montford and his wife Mary Elizabeth. During spring, they branded approximately 9,000 calves. Their cattle grazed on land between Pottawatomie country to the east, the North Canadian River to the north, the Wichita Reservation to the west and the Washita River to the south. That summer Mary Elizabeth fell ill. A doctor at Fort Reno, 25 miles away, was summoned. He determined she was suffering from an illness known as ergotism. She died on Aug. 27, and was buried in the family plot at the Silver City cemetery.

Toward the end of the decade, conflict arose when settlers known as “Boomers” made attempts to enter the Unassigned Lands prior to the signing of the Indian Appropriations Act of 1889. The Act stated that 1.8 million acres of the Unassigned Lands were to be opened to settlement for claimants, in what became known as the Land Rush of 1889. Some of Montford’s holdings were in this region. In preparation for the land rush, the Army ordered all cattlemen to remove their livestock from Oklahoma Territory. Montford’s son, Edward Bryant, known as “E.B.,” gathered men and began herding their cattle toward the Chickasaw Nation. They were able to successfully gather and complete the cattle drive to the Chickasaw Nation just hours before the land rush began April 22, 1889.

Many changes occurred following the land rush. Vast sections of prairie were fenced off with barbed wire. The Johnson family were the first ranchers in western Indian Territory to use the fencing to define areas of land they controlled. The dramatic increase in population caused tremendous growth for towns - especially those where railroad depots were located. Montford, along with friends and family, became founders of several banks in the towns of Chickasha and Minco. However, Montford remained primarily interested in ranching and continued to seek new lands to graze his livestock. In November 1893, federal officials created the Dawes Commission with the purpose of changing tribal lands held in common into single holdings that would be placed in the ownership of individual Chickasaws. Montford considered the commission to be a treachery. Most distressing were the commission’s policies that forbade Chickasaws from purchasing more land than was allotted, though white settlers were not restricted from purchasing as much land as they pleased. Despite much protest from the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, the commission persisted.

Throughout his life, Montford suffered from poor health, the worst of which included malaria. He made several trips to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to visit health spas. He was also prescribed various medicines in an effort to ease some of his ailments. In the winter of 1895-96, Montford fell sick with numerous illnesses at once. After being bedridden for several months, he died Monday, Feb. 17, 1896. The following day, businesses closed their doors out of respect for the Chickasaw rancher. He was 52 years old. Montford was buried in the Silver City cemetery next to his first wife Mary Elizabeth. E.B. took control of his father’s affairs and looked after his many siblings, most of whom were still children. Montford’s second wife Addie died in 1905. She was buried next to him.

## MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

1. *The Chickasaw Rancher* blu-ray or DVD
2. Silver City map (from the documentary)
3. Classroom set of Crayola colored pencils
4. Photographs featured in movie
5. Classroom set of current Oklahoma map
6. Classroom set of maps of Indian Territory during the time of Montford Johnson

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY:

ranch	Canadian River	Minco
economy	Indian Territory	maverick
ledger art	cattle	Civil War
austere	Washita River	Newcastle
industry	Unassigned Lands	chuck wagon
pioneers	Chickasha	Chisholm Trail
treaty	reservation	Tuttle
water source	removal	Land Run
Conestoga wagon	Silver City	Purcell
brand	drift fence	nomadic tribes
buffalo	homestead	Johnsonville

# LESSON PLAN

## ENGAGE:

After reminding students of the Indian Removal Act, the teacher should then introduce the new surroundings of the Chickasaws which included Tishomingo, Blue River, Ft. Arbuckle and Ft. Washita.

## **THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830**

In 1830, President Andrew Jackson pursued a policy of Indian removal, forcing American Indians living in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi to give up their homelands and move hundreds of miles to territory in present-day Oklahoma. The forced migration of the Indians to the new territory became known as the Trail of Tears. The policy of Indian removal was devastating to Native Americans, their culture and their ways of life. Chickasaw families were met with hardship and death along the Removal, traveling hundreds of miles in extreme cold and heat.

## **REMOVAL**

Chickasaw Removal is the most traumatic chapter in Chickasaw history. As a result of Congress' Indian Removal Act, Chickasaw people were forced to remove to Indian Territory. The foresight and skilled negotiating practices of Chickasaw leaders led to favorable sales of Chickasaw lands in Mississippi. This allowed the Chickasaw Nation, unlike other tribes, to pay for their own removal.

Chickasaw families were met with hardship and death along the Removal, traveling hundreds of miles in extreme cold and heat; however, Chickasaws suffered less than other tribes because they controlled their departures and chose favorable seasons to travel. This undoubtedly saved many lives that otherwise could have been lost.

Other tribes removed to Indian Territory were the Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole. The Chickasaws were one of the last to remove. In 1837, the Chickasaw Nation signed the Treaty of Doaksville with the Choctaw Nation and purchased the right for the settlement of Chickasaw people in their own district within Choctaw Territory. Most Chickasaws removed to Indian Territory from 1837-1851. However, Chickasaw families continued to arrive in Indian Territory up to the 1890s, as evidenced by Chickasaw tribal enrollment in the Dawes Rolls.

As Chickasaws began to move into their district, they discovered Plains Indian tribes roaming freely across the lands. These tribes still lived a migratory lifestyle and made frequent raids on Chickasaw homesteads. They did not understand the United States removing other tribes onto their historic homeland. To fulfill the treaty promise to protect the removed Southeastern tribes, the federal government built Fort Washita and Fort Arbuckle to maintain peace between the various tribes. Chickasaws still desired their own separate territory to restore governmental authority for their people and separate affairs from the Choctaws. In 1856, the Chickasaw Nation separated from the Choctaws and created their own constitution for their own separate lands.

## Activity 1: “Jot Your Thoughts”

The teacher should encourage classroom discussion and instruct students to complete a KWL chart:

- What do you know?
- What do you wonder or wish you knew?
- What did you learn? The completion of this column of the chart should take place throughout the rest of the learning activities. Students should be encouraged to take notes during the viewing of the documentary.

*\*It is at the teacher’s discretion as to whether or not to show the entire documentary or just the portions relative to the parts of the lesson taught. Multiple viewings are encouraged as time allows.*

## EXPLORE:

This activity will provide students with the opportunity to complete map work that will familiarize them with cities, rivers and forts located in Indian Territory/early day Oklahoma.

## Activity 2: “Map the Seven Cities”

*Students will use map pencils or markers to locate and mark the following on a map of Oklahoma:*

- Cities--Chickasha, Tuttle, Minco, Silver City, Purcell, Johnsonville, Newcastle
- Rivers--Canadian River, Washita River, Blue River
- Forts: Ft. Washita and Ft. Arbuckle
- Montford Johnson’s estate at Silver City

## EXPLAIN:

This activity will provide students with the opportunity to imagine life on the ranch by looking at that life from a specific point of view.



### Activity 3: “Life on the Ranch”

*The teacher should instruct each student to choose a particular role (rancher, wife, ranch hand, child) on the ranch and write a descriptive journal entry of a typical day on the ranch. The entry should include a schedule of the day, expected tasks, and how his/her job contributes to the success of the ranch. The journal entry should include the five senses: the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and sensations of a day on the ranch. The length of the journal entry is at the teacher’s discretion.*

### EXTEND:

This extension activity will allow students to use their dramatic abilities to bring a role to life.

### Activity 4: “Meanwhile Back at the Ranch” - A Tableau

*The teacher should set the stage for this activity by playing cowboy music and serving ranch style or chuck wagon food.*

Before beginning the activity, the teacher should ask each student to research a particular role from life on a ranch. The students should know enough about his/her particular role to bring the role to life. After the role has been developed, each character should be part of a tableau and should be asked to “freeze” until an audience member taps a “button” or touches the character’s arm to set the character into action.

The characters should reflect roles on the ranch such as the teacher at the new school, the cook, the store clerk, the farmhand (fixing posts), the child tender, the animal caretaker, the ranch manager. As the culminating activity of the unit, the teacher may choose to invite parents and special guests to the tableau presentation.

### EVALUATE:

The teacher may choose to assess the journal writing assignment, to use the rubric provided to assess the tableau activity or to assess the specific map work. Other formative or cumulative assessments may be considered.

# ALIGNMENT TO OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

## 4TH GRADE CONTENT STANDARDS

4.1.2 Describe the concept of federalism by comparing powers exercised by local, state and national levels of government recognizing tribal sovereignty as a tribal nation's inherent right to self-govern.

4.2.1 Use maps and other geographic representations (such as globes and graphs), tools and technologies to acquire, process and report information from a spatial perspective.

4.3.1.B. Identify major Native American groups and their ways of life in each region, including economic impact, customs and viewpoints on land usage and ownership.

4.1.W.1 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences at an appropriate pace.

4.3.2.A. Identify the characteristics of culture (language, customs, beliefs, food, clothing, shelter) and compare the cultural characteristics of different regions of the United States.

4.3.2.B. Explain how the characteristics of culture affect the ways in which people live.

4.4.2.A. Identify and locate on a map the major cities of the United States, including their relative location to natural resources and transportation routes.

## SOCIAL STUDIES PRACTICES

### *3. Acquire, Apply and Evaluate Evidence*

Understanding and using strategies to analyze evidence in the social studies. Students will evaluate historical, geographic and economic information. Students will draw conclusions from primary and secondary sources to formulate informed decisions.

### *4. Read Critically and Interpret Information and Sources*

Understanding the purpose of engaging with text. Students will evaluate factual information and points of view as presented in text. Students will read historical and contemporary texts to engage in collaborative discussion.

### *5. Engage in Evidence-Based Writing*

Understanding the multiple purposes of the writing process. Students will develop written products designed for a variety of social studies related investigations. Students will use and integrate evidence to present knowledge and support opinion.

## VIEWING GUIDE

**1. Before we watch the documentary, what are some things you can write in the “Know” column of your KWL Chart? What do you Wonder about? After watching the documentary, what new things have you Learned?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Answers will vary.

**2. Would you like to be a rancher in the 1800s? Why or why not?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Answers will vary.

**3. Who was Montford Johnson?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Montford was a Chickasaw and a rancher in the cattle industry of Indian Territory. He provided livelihood for many people of different backgrounds. He was a valuable member of the community. His legacy continues until this day.

**4. How did his success improve the economy of Indian Territory and improve the lives of others?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* He provided families the means to survive during difficult times (Civil War, drought) as well as a way of life through land, cattle, food and upward mobility.

**5. How did women’s contributions add to his success?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* Women ran the ranch while men were away on cattle drives. Pillars of the community, they fed their neighbors and educated the Native American and non-Native children.

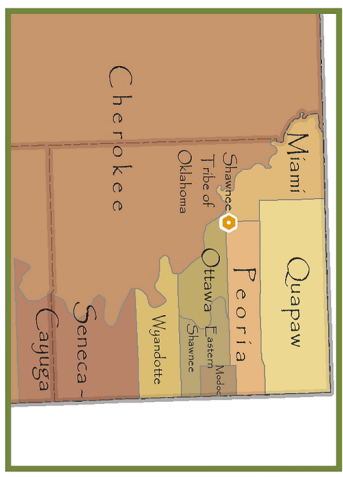
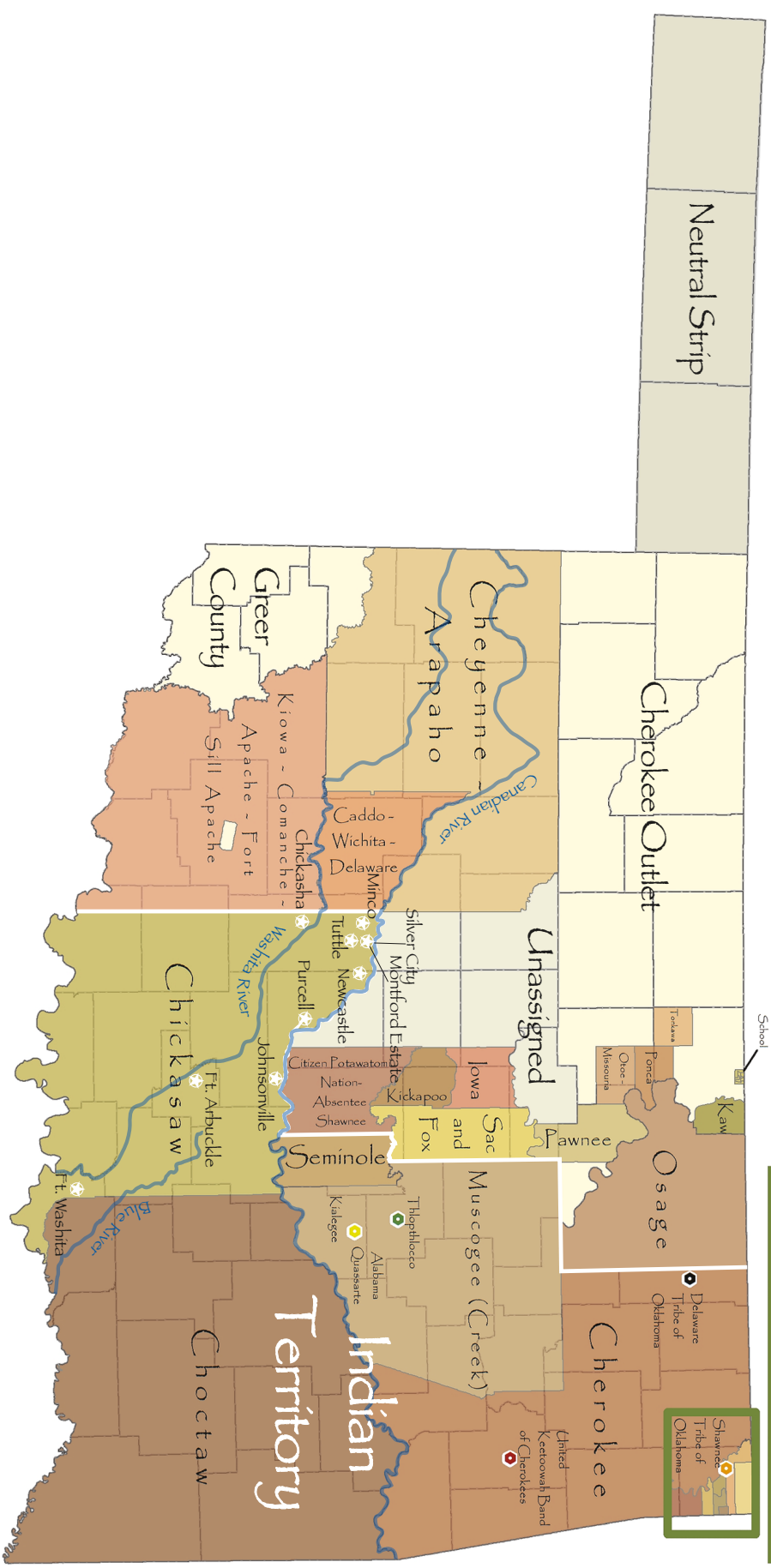
**6. What were the contributions of the former slaves and immigrants?**

*POSSIBLE ANSWERS:* They worked as partners, hand-in-hand with the ranchers, sharing responsibilities and profits. Many developed their own businesses and ranches as a result of Montford Johnson’s generous leadership and guidance.

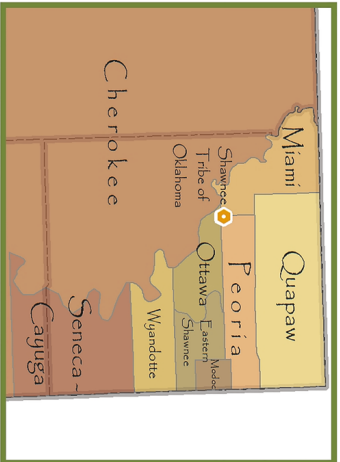
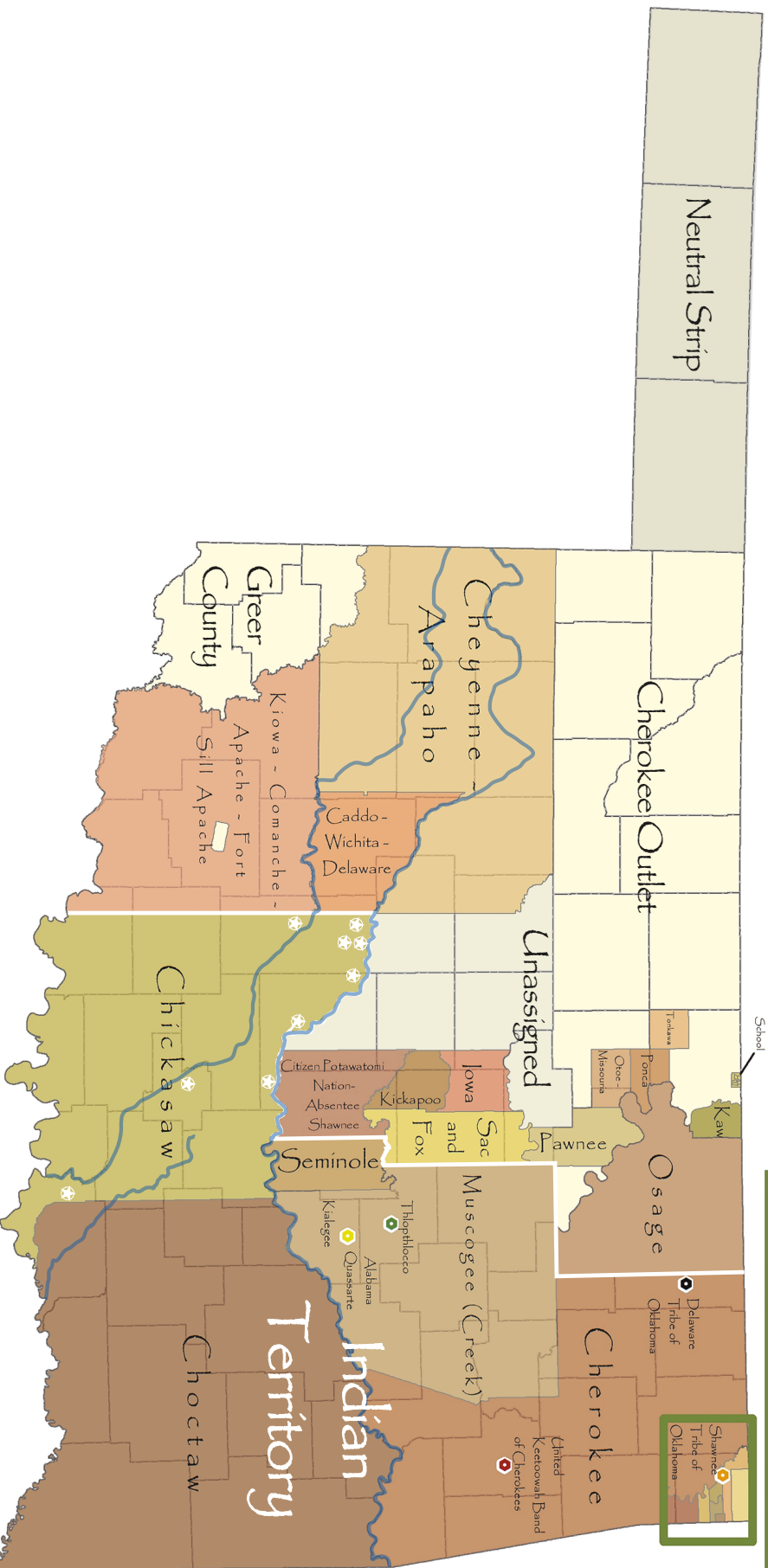
## **K - W - L C H A R T**

<b>What do I know?</b>	<b>What do I want to find out?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>

# Oklahoma and Indian Territories



# Oklahoma and Indian Territories



# CHICKASAW RANCHER

## ACTIVITY 2 MAP THE SEVEN CITIES

