The Creek War of 1813-1814

What Would You Do?
“In classrooms where teachers use deliberation, students learn to think critically, work through differences, and interact with people who may or may not share their point of view. Teaching through deliberation provides students with the skills and abilities to work with others as citizens to claim a better future for their communities.”

- Stacie Molnar-Main, Deliberation in the Classroom

This issue guide is designed for classroom deliberation on a period of Alabama history that deserves more of our attention: the Creek Indian Civil War of 1813-14. Deliberation is a form of discussion where participants weigh the pros and cons of different approaches to solving a complex problem. Participants work through various tradeoffs or consequences of actions with respect and passion, and, over time, they develop skills required for living in a democratic society: critical thinking, communication, judgment, and empathy. This classroom deliberation invites students to consider the difficult choices that faced Creek Indians in 1813.

About the Project
This issue guide was developed in collaboration with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation as part of a research project on integrating historical and civic education. Partners include the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University; Clarke County Historical Museum; and the David Mathews Center for Civic Life. Special thanks to colleagues at the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, as well as Dr. Kathryn Holland Braund, History Department, Auburn University. This issue guide is dedicated to Robert Thrower (1961-2017), Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Poarch Creek Indians. Robert was a passionate advocate for this project and a key contributor to its development.

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1790s
Benjamin Hawkins begins to carry out the Plan of Civilization

1799
Hawkins attempts to direct National Council policies

1806
The U.S. begins building the Federal Road.

September 1811
Tecumseh visits the Creeks
In 1813, the relationship between Creek Indians and their growing neighbor, the United States, was becoming tense due to several challenges.

**The Plan of Civilization**
In the late 1700s, the U.S. government began the “Plan of Civilization.” Under this plan, Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins worked to change how Creek people lived. He told Creeks to make their farms private and build fences, instead of working together in one large field to produce enough food for the entire village. Creek men were told to farm and raise animals, rather than depending on hunting for food and trade. Many Creeks profited because of the new technology and practices introduced by the plan, but many others felt they were losing their cultural traditions.

**Tecumseh’s Visit**
Tecumseh, a Shawnee leader, visited the Creeks in 1811. He spoke to the National Council, a gathering of important Creek leaders, in Tuckabatchee. Tecumseh said that Native Americans should band together, strengthen their independence, and fight to push out U.S. settlers from native lands. Some Creeks viewed Tecumseh’s plan as dangerous. Other Creeks, who were willing to “raise the red stick of war” against the National Council and the Americans, would become known as Red Sticks.

**Challenges Facing Creek Indians in 1813**

**Before the War**
- Creek Territory 1806-1814
- Land Creeks Lost Before 1806

**In 1813, the relationship between Creek Indians and their growing neighbor, the United States, was becoming tense due to several challenges.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>A second group of Creeks</td>
<td>January 1813</td>
<td>murdered U.S. settlers and are executed.</td>
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<td>U.S. completes the Federal</td>
<td>November 1811</td>
<td>completes the Federal Road.</td>
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<td>Eight Red Sticks kill a</td>
<td>Spring 1812</td>
<td>Eight Red Sticks kill a family of U.S. settlers and are executed by</td>
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<td>family of U.S. settlers and</td>
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The Federal Road
In the early 1800s, the National Council was forced to let the U.S. government build a small road through Creek territory. In 1811, the road was widened for more travelers and U.S. troops. Many Creek people built taverns and ferries and were able to benefit financially from travelers along the road. Others were angered by U.S. travelers who stayed in Creek territory or settled along the border.

Problems with the National Council
The Creek National Council traditionally had very little power and was mostly a way for important chiefs and leaders to work together. Benjamin Hawkins pressured the Council to use more power over Creek towns. In 1812, for example, a group of Red Stick warriors, returning from a visit to the Shawnee Indians, murdered American settlers near the Creek Nation. Hawkins told the National Council to punish these warriors, and the Council executed the guilty Creeks. This upset the Red Sticks and more traditional Creeks, because it was usually the job of town leaders to punish lawbreakers.

Now...

...Imagine you are a Creek Indian, and it is springtime in 1813. Some people are talking about going to war with the United States and Creeks friendly with the U.S. Some people are talking about stopping the Red Sticks from causing any more trouble. Others are willing to move to keep their families safe. You have at least one family member who supports one of these three approaches, and you must decide what to do for yourself and your family.

What will you do?

- Preserve Our Culture at Any Cost
- Ensure the Safety of Our Family
- Make the Best of Our Situation
Josiah Francis (Hillis Hadjo) believes that close ties to the United States government are a threat to our traditions and way of life. He and the Red Sticks are willing to fight our leaders, fellow Creeks, and even the U.S. military in order to end this threat to Creek culture and independence.

**Approach 1:**

**Preserve Our Culture at Any Cost**

**We should...**
- Remove National Council leaders.
- End trade with the U.S. and return to traditional Creek ways.
- Push out U.S. settlers and retake lost Creek lands.

**But...**
- This could lead to a civil war with National Council supporters and their U.S. allies.
- Many Creeks may be unwilling to give up businesses, wealth, and new technologies.
- The U.S. might declare war in order to keep these lands.
Many fear that a major conflict between Red Sticks and Creeks more friendly to the United States would destroy our nation. They value safety and the lives of their families more than anything else and are even willing to move their homes to avoid any fighting.

**Approach 2: Ensure the Safety of Our Family**

**Actions**

*We should...*

- Move away to more peaceful areas in Creek territory or migrate to areas outside the nation.
- Ask important Creek leaders to speak out against the Red Sticks and avoid war.
- Build forts and walls around our towns to protect us during any conflict.

**But...**

- We would have to leave crops, animals, and houses behind, and we could be attacked on the way.
- This could anger the Red Sticks even more, and risk the safety of our family.
- **Forts** could become valuable targets for the Red Sticks or Americans.
William McIntosh thinks there are benefits to a friendship with the United States government. The U.S. can provide trade, new technology, and protection to our nation. He and others like him are willing to fight against the Red Sticks and cooperate with the U.S. so that both nations can move forward together.

**We should...**

- Bring Red Stick leaders to justice to restore order.
- Go to war against the Red Sticks and ensure our nation continues to advance.
- Join with the U.S. for protection and end the dangerous rebellion quickly.

**But...**

- New leaders could emerge and take up the Red Stick push toward war.
- Any army we could build would be small and scattered.
- The U.S. could use an alliance to force us to give up more land or completely take over our nation.
1. Tuckabatchee
Tecumseh spoke to the National Council at Tuckabatchee in 1811. The Red Sticks attacked the town on July 22, 1813 and forced survivors to flee.

2. Burnt Corn Creek
On July 27, 1813, Red Stick warriors were carrying supplies and ammunition from the Spanish in Pensacola back to Creek territory. The Americans and other Creeks attacked them at Burnt Corn Creek.

3. Fort Mims
Red Stick warriors attacked the fortified settlement of Samuel Mims on August 30, 1813. They killed over 250 Americans and Creeks and took many others captive. Americans called this the Fort Mims Massacre.

4. Fort Sinquefield
Red Stick warriors launched an unsuccessful attack on Fort Sinquefield on September 2, 1813.

5. Tallushatchee
This was Andrew Jackson’s first battle of the war. His troops defeated the Red Stick warriors at Tallushatchee on November 3, 1813.

6. Talladega
The Battle of Talladega was a large victory for the Americans on November 9, 1813. Nearly 300 Red Stick warriors died and many more were wounded.

7. Hillabee
American troops, under General William Cocke, attacked Hillabee on November 18, 1813, only one day after the Creeks there asked Jackson for peace.

8. Holy Ground
American Troops attacked the fortified Red Stick town at Holy Ground on December 23, 1813. Led by William Weatherford, most of the Red Stick warriors escaped the attack.

9. Horseshoe Bend
Andrew Jackson led the attack on the last major Red Stick town on March 27, 1814. About 800 of the 1,000 Red Stick warriors were killed.

10. Fort Jackson
On August 9, 1814, leading Creek headmen representing the National Council signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson, ending the war.
End of the War and After

Last Battle and Treaty
The final battle of the Creek War, at Horseshoe Bend, happened on March 27, 1814. In this battle Andrew Jackson defeated the last Red Stick stronghold. On August 9, 1814, Creek leaders such as William McIntosh signed the Treaty of Fort Jackson. This officially ended the war and gave away more than 22 million acres of land, or almost half of Creek territory, to the United States.

After the War
Land Given to the U.S. in
the Treaty of Fort Jackson
Creek Territory After the
War

What Happened Next
About fifteen years later, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act. This law gave Jackson the ability to make treaties with Native American nations in order to gain their lands. In 1832, the Creek Nation signed the Treaty of Cusseta, also known as the Treaty of Washington, which traded all of Creek territory for private land ownership. This led to many Creeks selling or being cheated out of their land. By 1836, any Creeks still in Alabama and Georgia were forced to give up their land and move west of the Mississippi River to federal land known as Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). All Indian tribes east of the Mississippi River were coerced into signing removal treaties. The journey west was harsh. Among the Cherokees, who had a high death rate, the removal west is known as the Trail of Tears.

Nov. 18, 1813
Attack on Hillabee

Dec. 23, 1813
Battle of Holy Ground

March 27, 1814
Battle of Horseshoe Bend

Aug. 9, 1814
Treaty of Fort Jackson

May 28, 1830
Indian Removal Act

March 24, 1832
Treaty of Cusseta
Glossary

**Allies, Alliance:** An official friendship between two or more governments or nations.

**Conflict:** A fight or disagreement.

**Cooperate:** To work together.

**Fortified, Fort:** A place where walls and other defenses have been built to protect against attack.

**Migrate:** When a group of people moves from one place to another.

**National Council:** The national government of the Creeks, which was made up Creek chiefs from around the nation.

**Rebellion:** A violent act or fight against a government.

**Red Sticks:** A group of Creeks who joined together to fight the National Council and United States in order to return to more traditional ways.

**Threat:** Something that could be a danger.

**Tradeoff:** A consequence, or what we must give up to get something we want more.

**Treaty:** A formal deal or agreement between two governments or nations.
Resources


Haveman, Christopher D. *Bending Their Way Onward: Creek Indian Removal in Documents*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.


