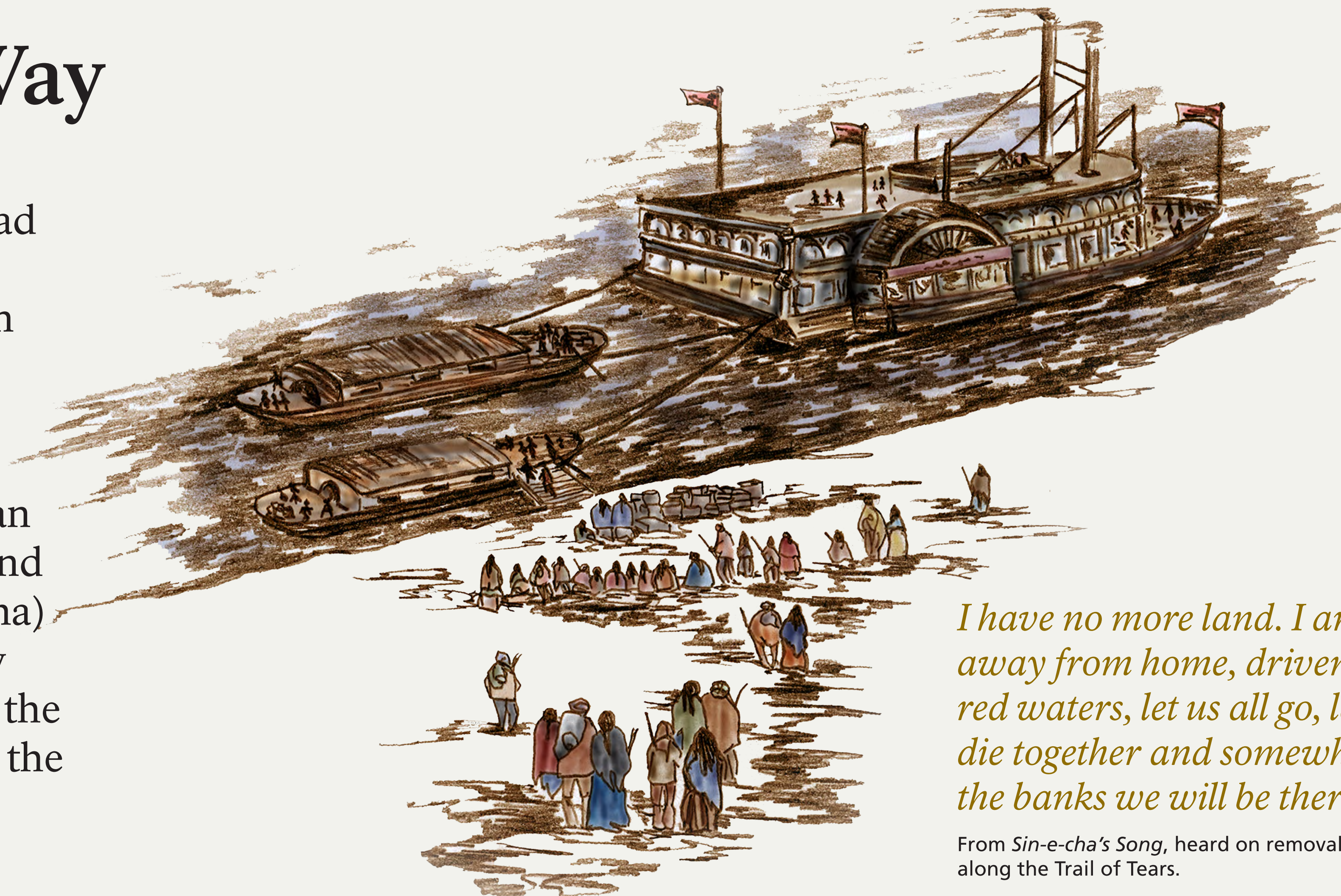




They Passed This Way

Home to thousands of men, women, and children, the Cherokee Nation once spread across parts of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Alabama. The 1830 Indian Removal Act required that the Cherokee surrender their land and move west.

In 1838, more than 15,000 Cherokee began their trek west from their eastern homeland to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) over the “Trail of Tears.” They traveled by roads and rivers, including this stretch of the Arkansas River. Nearly 1,000 died during the journey westward, and up to 4,000 died as a result of the forced removal process.



I have no more land. I am driven away from home, driven up the red waters, let us all go, let us all die together and somewhere upon the banks we will be there.

From *Sin-e-cha's Song*, heard on removal boats along the Trail of Tears.

Dangers of Water Travel along the Trail of Tears

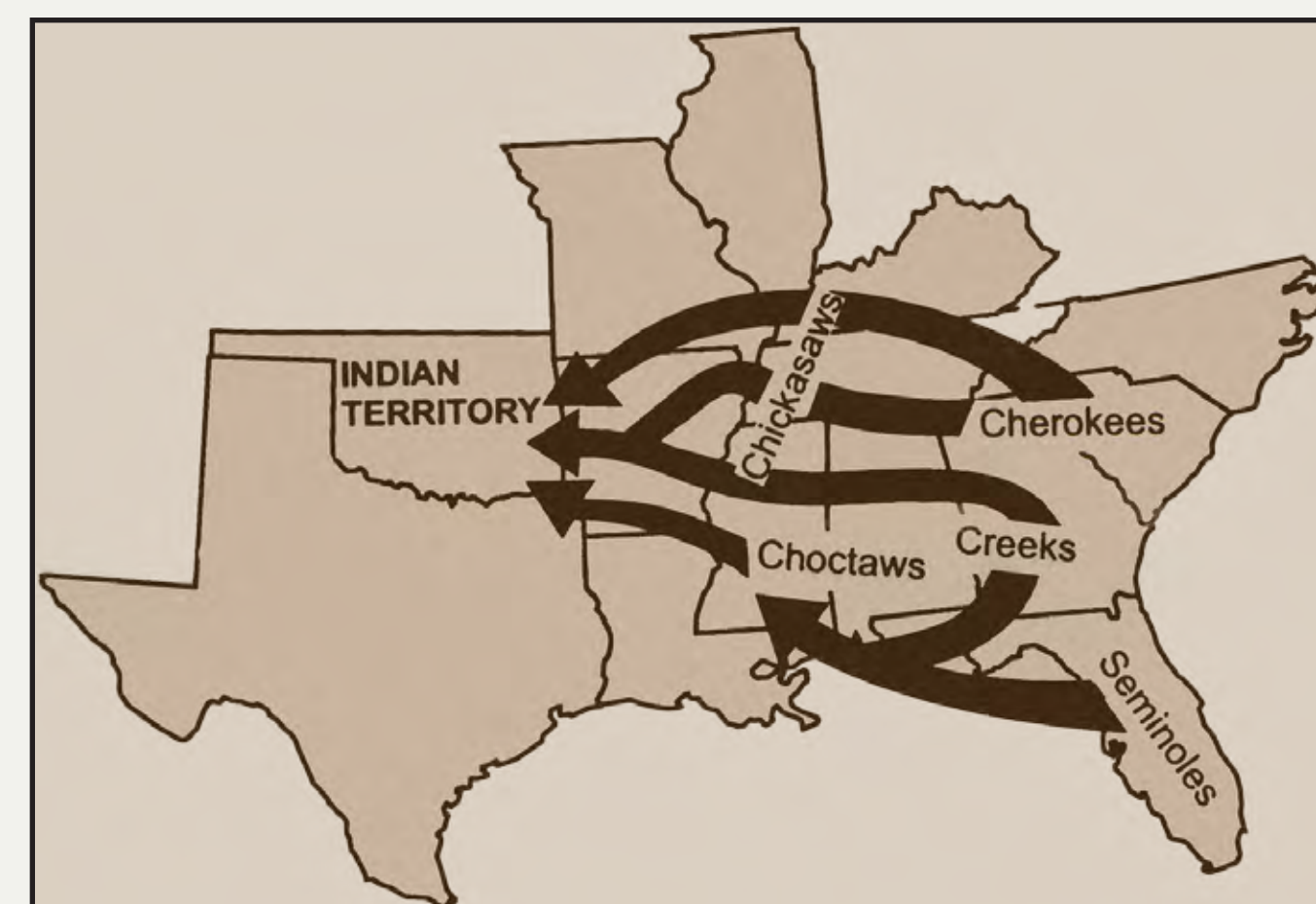
Few groups of Cherokee traveled by water. After hearing of the difficulties faced by military-led groups that had traveled the water route, Cherokee leaders petitioned for permission to manage the removal of their own people.

They decided to remove over land routes to avoid the dangers of travel by boat, including the quick spread of sickness onboard, the fear of disease along the river lowlands, and unpredictable water levels and weather patterns.

Federal Indian Removal Policy

Federal Indian removal policy aroused fierce and bitter debate. Supporters of the policy claimed it was a benevolent action to save the tribes east of the Mississippi River from being overwhelmed and lost in the onslaught of an expanding American population. Opponents decried its inhumanity and the tragic consequences it had for the Indian peoples. One thing was certain; removal freed millions of acres of desired Indian lands for use by white settlers.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 resulted in the removal of thousands of American Indians from their ancestral lands for new homes in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). They traveled by existing roads and rivers. Many groups left in the fall, hoping to avoid the disease and heat of summer travel, and instead faced treacherous winter weather. Many died during the ordeal of the Trail of Tears.



In the 1830s, the federal government forcibly removed approximately 16,000 Cherokee, 21,000 Muscogee (Creek), 9,000 Choctaw, 6,000 Chickasaw, and 4,000 Seminole from their ancestral homes in the southeastern United States.

Today

Despite the hardships of the journey, members of the five removed tribes established new lives in the West. They stand as successful sovereign nations, proudly preserving cultural traditions, while adapting to the challenges of the 21st century.

Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears created a new sovereign nation in present-day Oklahoma. Some Cherokee remained in North Carolina and, due to a special exemption, formed the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



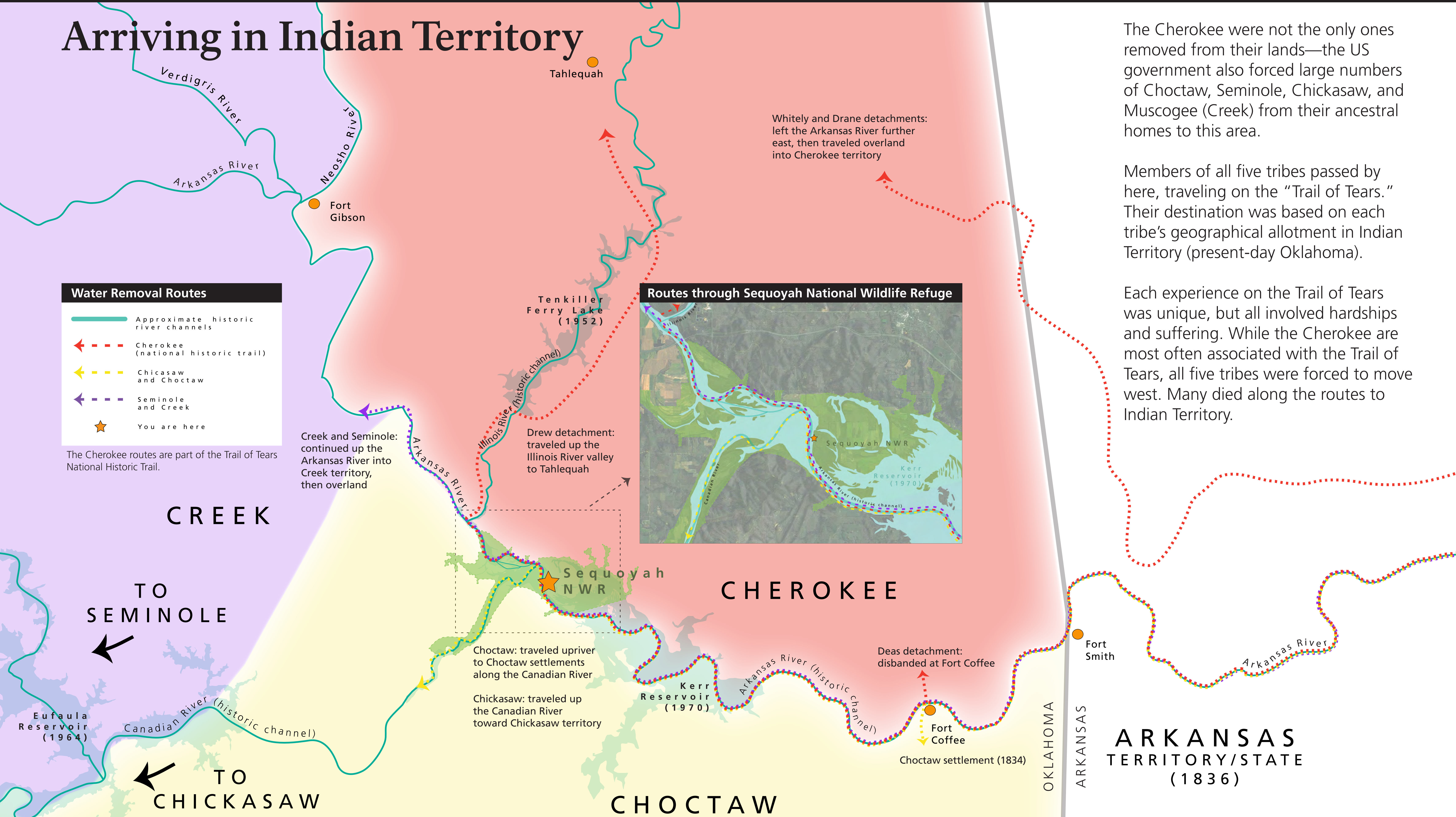
By helping to preserve historic sites and trail segments, and developing areas for public use, the story of the forced removal of the Cherokee people and other American Indian tribes is remembered and told by the National Park Service and its partners.

You can visit more sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

Learn more at www.nps.gov/trte



Arriving in Indian Territory



The Cherokee were not the only ones removed from their lands—the US government also forced large numbers of Choctaw, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Muscogee (Creek) from their ancestral homes to this area.

Members of all five tribes passed by here, traveling on the “Trail of Tears.” Their destination was based on each tribe’s geographical allotment in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma).

Each experience on the Trail of Tears was unique, but all involved hardships and suffering. While the Cherokee are most often associated with the Trail of Tears, all five tribes were forced to move west. Many died along the routes to Indian Territory.