



Department of Chahta
Immi's Mission Statement:

Chahta Immi toksali at
nanah mihchachikat,
Chahta Immi atokma
anokfokkichit, annowachit,
achonnachit, hayakachit
isht oklilayachih.



DEPARTMENT OF CHAHTA IMMI

"Lifeways of the Choctaw People"

Tribal Archives

Choctaw Museum

Cultural Affairs

Tribal Language

Special Projects/ Media

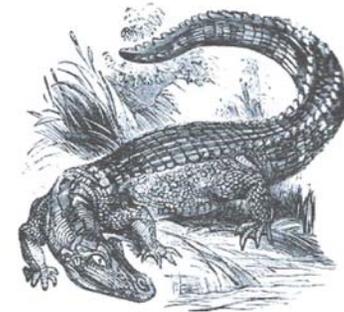
Chahta Immi Cultural Center

The mission of the Department of Chahta Immi is to inspire, promote, embrace, and enhance the Cultural heritage of the Choctaw People.

* For more information please call (601) 663-7506 or the MBCI Office of Public Information at (601) 663-7532 and visit the MBCI website: www.choctaw.org



Dancing
With

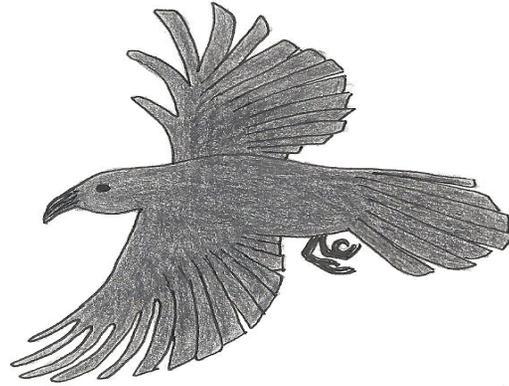


Our
Neighbors

Dancing With Our Neighbors

It is only from the time of European's contact that we have a written history of the Choctaw people. John R. Swanton shares collected writings describing the Choctaw as the most populous and peaceful tribe in the region. They were simple farmers, stewards of the land with reverence for all living things, devoted to the harmony and balance of the earth. They practiced seasonal migration dictated by hunting, gathering, and planting. Although the Choctaws adapted to the changes that came with the European's. Much of their indigenous culture was lost or altered from that influence.

Archaeological evidence suggests the Cosmos of Southeastern peoples consisted of three worlds: **Upper**/sky(order) - **Middle**/earth surface (fluctuated) - **Under**/below surface (chaotic). It was the duty of human beings to strive for harmony and balance. As with birdman, historical southeastern tribes had a variety of sacred creations that combined elements of all three worlds: Serpents with human faces and wings, deer with talons and snakeskin, cougars with fish like tails and falcon eyes (able to traverse all three worlds to speak with the residents there).



Art tells a great deal about what they wore, believe, made, and the activities they engaged in. BIRD-MAN: half human, half bird figure with a ceremonial baton in one hand and a severed head in the other, a waist pouch is suspended from his belt (medicine bag) wearing a feather cape, headdress, ear spools, a lightning whelk shell pendant, beaded anklets, bracelets, and shoulder tattoos. His half flesh, half skull feathered headdress & cloak wrapped around him like burials. The Peregrine Falcon and his forked eye motif fill Mississippian religious art.

Of the three types of Choctaw dances genre's (Animal, War and Social), Animal dances represent the largest number surviving today (Snake, Raccoon, Duck, Turkey, Quail, Turtle, Tick, Mosquito). Many other dances have been documented but are no longer practiced (Horn, Owl, Bison, Bear, Eagle and Alligator).



The Alligator dance was described by Bartram, 1791, was one that participants wore masks. In this dance "They have masks made like the head of this animal, one or two distinguishing themselves thus, while five or six others take masks of different animals which the alligator commonly eats, and then they make a thousand grotesque antics."

The use of animal masks has been mentioned in the "Nittak Hollo Cito", a community Christmas gift giving event and in the telling of animal stories which have long been used as fable, to teach lessons of life.

