

**The Indian Removal Act** was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830. The act authorized him to negotiate with the Native Americans in the Southern United States for their removal to federal territory west of the Mississippi River in exchange for their homelands.

The term "**Five Civilized Tribes**" has been used officially and unofficially since at least 1866 and derives from the colonial and early federal period in the [history of the United States](#). It refers to five [Native American](#) nations—the [Cherokee](#), [Chickasaw](#), [Choctaw](#), [Creek](#) (Muscogee), and [Seminole](#). These are the first five tribes that Anglo-European settlers generally considered to be "civilized".

Examples of colonial attributes adopted by these five tribes include Christianity, centralized governments, literacy, market participation, written constitutions, intermarriage with white Americans, and plantation slavery practices. The Five Civilized Tribes tended to maintain stable political relations with the Europeans.

The Civil War (1861) was not good to the tribes. The first three battles of the Civil War were fought in Indian territory, with some tribes joining treaties with the Confederates, and others with the Union.

Washington promulgated a doctrine that held that American Indians were biologically equals, but that their society was inferior. He formulated and implemented a policy to encourage the "civilizing" process, which [Thomas Jefferson](#) continued. The noted Andrew Jackson historian Robert Remini wrote "they presumed that once the Indians adopted the practice of [private property](#), built homes, farmed, educated their children, and embraced Christianity, these Native Americans would win acceptance from white Americans

How different would be the sensation of a philosophic mind to reflect that instead of exterminating a part of the human race by our modes of population that we had persevered through all difficulties and at last had imparted our Knowledge of cultivating and the arts, to the Aborigines of the Country by which the source of future life and happiness had been preserved and extended. But it has been conceived to be impracticable to civilize the Indians of North America – This opinion is probably more convenient than just.

— *Henry Knox, Notes to George Washington from Henry Knox.*

Beginning in 1874, they were dealt with as a single body by the [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#) of the [U.S. Department of Interior](#), but there has never been any unification or overall organization of these tribes under the name, 5 CIVILIZED TRIBES.



CHEROKEE



CHOCTAW



MUSCOGEE  
(CREEK)



CHICKASAW



SEMINOLE

