

My trail of tears

My name is John Ross, today I'm staying in Oklahoma. I'm 70, I come from Georgia and I'm one of the last Cherokees born in Georgia. As you probably know, I was forced to leave my ancestral land due to the gold in Georgia. The settlers wanted the gold so the government sent 7000 soldiers in Georgia to force the Cherokees to leave for Oklahoma. It's called "the trail of tears". I'll explain this journey to you.

Before my 14 years of age, my brother, mother, father and I were in Georgia (before 1838). My family farmed and some people in my village too. Our village was really happy, everything was good, we had enough food and water. But one day, my family and I saw many government soldiers, they were 7000 ! As soon as the soldiers arrived on our land, the safety and the joy turned into hell. The soldiers asked us to leave our house. They forced the Cherokees to leave.

The distance between Georgia and Oklahoma is 1200 miles ! My dad refused to leave our house, so the soldiers dragged him out of our house and burnt it. We were so afraid of the soldiers. It was impossible to refuse, they had guns, swords... So we started to walk. Don't forget the journey started in winter. First we left our village, we were barefoot without warm clothes and blankets. After that we left Georgia. We travelled a big hill on foot. We were so heavy step after step, we walked in sleet. The first death came. Then we travelled through a river. We were extremely exhausted due to the big journey but we had to continue. The snow in the river was so cold ! My feet were blue ! The weather was the biggest problem. My friends died because of the diseases and exhaustion. It was terrible to see them die.

Finally we arrived in Oklahoma. We arrived with already 4000 deaths. The Apaches didn't want to be with our tribe,

because they hunt the animals for the food. They wanted to keep the animals for them and not give to our tribe.

Today I'm sad to remember this, it is terrible. Now I'm in Oklahoma and the life is really not like the life in Georgia. Here we have to hunt to survive. And in Georgia we had farms, it's hard to survive here. I'm angry when I think the government can kill 4000 people just for gold, so they could have more. They don't care about us. We walked until death. This is why we call this "the trail of tears".

Benjamin B.