

## People of the Southeast Woodlands 5.1.2

In Chapter 1 you read how the Mississippian culture flourished along the Mississippi River. Archaeologists believe the Muskogean-speaking peoples of the southern woodlands were descendants of these mound-building peoples. Muskogean is one of three main language families spoken in the southern woodlands. A language family is a group of languages that share certain things in common, such as vocabulary words or grammar. Find the Muskogean language family in the Datagraphic on page 107. Among the groups that spoke Muskogean were the Creek, Chickasaw, and Choctaw.



▲ A Creek shoulder bag

### The Creek

The Creek arranged their towns around a central town plaza, used for dancing, religious ceremonies, and games. Surrounding the plaza were family homes built out of poles and covered with grass, mud, or thatch. For food, the Creek relied on the “Three Sisters” of corn, beans, and squash. In addition, they hunted small animals and gathered plants.

To help protect themselves, the Creek formed the **Creek Confederacy**. A confederacy is a union of people who join together for a common purpose.

The Creek Confederacy divided its towns into peace (white) towns and war (red) towns. Red towns declared war, planned military actions, and held meetings with enemy groups. White towns passed laws and held conquered groups. However, during war, people in peace towns joined in the fighting.



## The Catawba

No one knows where the Siouan-speaking people of the southern woodlands lived before they settled in the Carolinas. Some archaeologists think they came to the area around the time Columbus arrived in the Americas. Others believe they came from the upper Ohio Valley or even Canada during wars in the 1600s. Still others suggest they have been present in the region for much longer.

As you can see on the Datagraphic on page 107, many Native American groups spoke Siouan languages. The Catawba, a Siouan-speaking people, lived in villages and built temples for public gatherings and religious ceremonies.

## The Cherokee

Iroquoian was one of the largest language families in the southern woodlands. The Cherokee and Tuscarora (tus kuh RAWR uh) were the largest Iroquoian-speaking groups in this area.

- ▼ The lush environment of the southeast woodlands provided many natural resources for Native Americans there.

Locate the Iroquoian language family in the Datagraphic on page 107.

While the Cherokee belonged to the same language family as the Iroquoian groups in the northern woodlands, their customs and ways of life were quite different. In fact, the Cherokee shared more with the Creek than with the peoples in the North. Like the Creek, the Cherokee grew the “Three Sisters” of corn, beans, and squash.

Each Cherokee village had its own leaders and made its own decisions. However, during times of celebration or war, villages came together. One celebration, called the Green Corn Festival, honored the summer’s first corn crop with dances and games.

**REVIEW** How did the Creek Confederacy divide its towns? *Compare and Contrast*



▲ A Cherokee mask

