REVITALIZING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY: EXAMINING NATIVE NATION BUILDING IN NORTH AMERICA AS A SEMI-SECULAR REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

by

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Jonathan Byrn, titled *Revitalizing Tribal Sovereignty: Examining Native Nation Building in North America as a Semi-Secular Revitalization Movement* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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 GV აკმაყოფილებით შეგიძლიათ და დასვენება.

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Abstract

Throughout Indian Country, the native nation building process has been a driving force in innovation, economic development, and the reclamation and strengthening of tribal sovereignty. This dissertation considers this process an example of Anthony F.C. Wallace’s concept of revitalization movements and demonstrates that the nation building process and applications by individual native nations constitute a semi-secular revitalization movement, specifically within the concepts of mazeway reformation. This paper pursues this idea through a close analysis of the nation building process in three specific case studies: the Cherokee Nation during the Early Republic Period of U.S. history and both the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in the later part of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Wallace’s model requires some slight modifications to fit the unique characteristics of nation building in Indian Country, but with such modifications it is a suitable application and can help to illuminate new aspects of the complexity of these unique cases, ultimately becoming applicable to other native nations undertaking the nation building process.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout Native American history, native nations have encountered and responded to various levels of stress and culture change. While this process is a natural occurrence in the cultural history of human societies, it occurs in a variety of ways. Anthony Wallace examined the socio-cultural and ideological response of indigenous cultures to increased levels of stress in his research on revitalization movements in the 1950’s and 60’s. Other types of responses have been identified and studied in anthropology utilizing the theories of cultural exchange, culture change, and acculturation. These major cultural shifts often led to developmental and organizational changes within the society, progressing toward more complex patterns of social interaction and structures, altering a myriad of aspects such as consumption patterns, relationships, gender roles, and even governance patterns. This process has continued through the present and will continue to perpetuity in one manner or another, affecting the ever-evolving social, cultural, and political dynamics of modern societies. In North America, the process has encountered drastic periods of change among indigenous nations and societies, seeing massive acceleration in the last two hundred years due to increased stress stemming from colonization and colonial practices by alien and, eventually occupying, nations.

In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, spurred by the successes of the Civil Rights and the Red Power movements in the United States, Indian country saw a trend toward increased expression of sovereignty and self-determination. This was further bolstered by President Nixon’s policy toward the reversal of the termination policies of the previous 30 years and the self-determination of Native Nations, as outlined in his message to the Congress on July 8th, 1970. (Nixon 8 July 1970) Following this mandate, activists and native nations assisted in designing and pushing through the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of
1975 (hereafter the Indian Self Determination Act). Following the implementation of this act, native nations across the United States accelerated their efforts for governance reorganization and expression of tribal sovereignty. In 1987, Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt, professors at Harvard University, initiated a project examining the implications of this act within Indian Country in the United States. This project quickly bloomed into a massive undertaking which is still active to this day, carrying out hundreds of projects in Indian Country over the past three decades, focusing on utilizing “systematic, comparative study of social and economic development on American Indian reservations” to understand “What works, where and why?” (hpaied.org/about) What Cornell and Kalt termed “nation building” describes a process which has been carried out in one manner or another within Indian country for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The adaptive capacity and development of native nations throughout time has been documented through historical, oral, and archaeological records and demonstrates the resourcefulness and imaginative processes undertaken by native nations, leading them to build into the sovereign entities encountered by European peoples and “explorers” upon invasion of North America. In their work, Cornell and Kalt recognized the massive surge toward decolonization and development within native nations and among indigenous peoples across North America which was bolstered by the passage of the Indian Self Determination Act and later the economic boom following the development and passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988.

This dissertation will examine the native nation building process as it has been utilized within Indian Country looking for aspects of its utilization and the underlying social movement that has served as a driver for its spread. By applying Anthony F.C. Wallace’s 1956 model of revitalization movements, this work will analyze native nation building, demonstrating that the
process and applications thereof by individual nations constitute a semi-secular revitalization movement as defined by Wallace, specifically within the concepts of mazeway reformation. By examining nation building case studies from different sets of circumstances, it shows the usefulness and adaptability of the process by individual nations. In the Cherokee case, nation building serves as a form of creative resistance to intense and increasing pressure from expanding colonial powers, while in the case of the Mississippi Choctaw and the Citizen Potawatomi, it occurs less as a resistance movement and more as a determined effort to seize new opportunities under loosening constraints and the introduction of beneficial federal programs, which allowed the nations to update and reform systems that were failing or insufficient. Each application of the nation building process is unique to the nation itself and constitutes a customization of the overarching process or model to fit unique circumstances, cultures, and mazeways.

In their chapter “Two Approaches to Development of Native Nations: One Works, the Other Doesn’t” in the work *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development* Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt’s definition of the native nation building approach centers on nations whose economic development performances have been particularly striking in the last forty years, with the Indian Self Determination Act opening the door for major strides in governance reorganization and tribal sovereignty. (Cornell & Kalt, 2007:6) When examining American Indian history, native nation building, or some version of the broadly defined concept, has occurred throughout time, and often utilizes the same aspects defined by Cornell and Kalt. European and Euro-American colonialism led to a much higher rate of occurrence of this process, speeding up the timeline due to exponentially increased stress placed on indigenous
nations, but signs of the patterns of cultural change associated with the process are evident in archaeological sites predating even the earliest European settlements in the Americas.

**Concepts and Theory**

Native nations in the United States have a unique situation which lends itself to increased tribal sovereignty in comparison to those experienced by indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, and South America. Through legislations like the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (25 U.S. C. § 461), the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (Public Law 93-638), and numerous Supreme Court rulings and opinions, native nations in the United States have had a number of sovereign rights over their own communities recognized and codified into policy. This aspect sets them apart from many other indigenous communities in that their sovereignty and status as domestic, dependent nations is an enforceable provision, and one that has been repeatedly brought forward in Congressional and court procedures, especially in the last century. As a result of the increased rights and possibilities which stemmed from the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act and the Self Determination Act, native nations in the United States have seen a massive, widespread push toward the utilization and expression of tribal sovereignty and sovereign rights since the 1930’s, with a major surge in the last part of the 20th century through the present. This pattern of development has led to an increased presence for native nations, both within the United States and within the broader world economy and community.

In moving forward through tribal sovereignty and action many native nations have taken it upon themselves to become a presence in the new globalized world. Through expressions of sovereignty and self-determination, different nations have created infrastructures and businesses which have become major players and even models for others in both the indigenous and non-
indigenous population worldwide. Through initiatives collectively known as native nation building, indigenous groups in the United States have worked on firmly establishing and defending their individual sovereignty as nations, fighting a classification or status as underprivileged minorities or racialization as a collective racial group instead of individual, sovereign political entities. By adapting specific parts of the globalized world and utilizing them to their favor, several nations have become major players in manufacturing, technology, construction, natural resource management, and many other fields, both in the indigenous and international business arena.

**Native Nation Building**

While nation building has been defined as the construction or structuring of a national identity using the power of the state, in recent times, the term nation building has been used to refer to what has traditionally been called stability operations, or third-party state-building. This generally refers to infrastructure development such as building roads and railways, and enforcing rule of law, generally by an occupying or outside force as in times following conflict such as the case with the United States in Japan after World War II and recently with Iraq and Afghanistan. (Deutsch & Folt 1966; Mylonas 2012:xx) In this sense, it differs drastically from native nation building.

Native nation building has been defined as “the enhanced capacity of indigenous nations to realize their own cultural, educational, economic, environmental, and political objectives through foundational actions and institutions of their own design, initiation and control.” (Begay, Lecture 2012) These nations look at their governing structures and other traditional means of tribal organization as a model but look toward adapting more effective means of management given the economic and political realm that exists in the present time. In order to do this, a
foundational shift is required to move away from a system which had worked for time immemorial but might not be effective in the modern world to one that would benefit the tribe, yet could be a step away from tradition. (Begay et al. 2007:296-310) Through gaming and other influxes of outside income, aside from tribal input, these groups invest in the infrastructure of their nations and work to create business alliances which in turn put money back into their coffers for further investment.

Along with the financial and economic benefits of these actions, native nations focus on the cultural legitimacy of the various systems in place within the nation. For an institution to be successful, along with a slew of other aspects, it must be culturally legitimate to the nation. In the modern world, this cultural match needs to focus on the contemporary culture, allowing it to deal with modern circumstances while focusing on the nation’s worldviews and beliefs at the time. In focusing on the contemporary culture and issues, these nations set out on a path to organizing a system which works to deal with the modern world while establishing a system customized to their particular needs and culture, stepping away from the pervasive boilerplate systems instituted during the era following the Indian Reorganization Act and as a result of assimilationist practices at the turn of the 20th century.

In their chapter “Two Approaches to the Development of Native Nations”, Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt outline the differences between the “standard approach” to development in Indian Country and the “nation building approach.” (Cornell & Kalt 2007:3-33) Therein, they outline the nation building approach very basically as native nations asserting decision making power, backing up that power with effective governing institutions, matching those institutions to the political culture, utilizing strategic decision making, and possessing leaders who serve as nation builders and mobilizers. (Cornell & Kalt 2007:19) In basic key words, this correlates with
tribal sovereignty, capable institutions, cultural match, strategic outlook, and public-spirited leadership. These attributes make up the core of native nation building and have been the center of the programming and research carried out by educational institutions such as the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development and the Native Nations Institute in Tucson, Arizona. These educational and outreach programs, spawned following the success of the Harvard Project’s early publications, have elevated native nation building practices to the status of a pan-Indian movement. Nations from all over Indian Country and even internationally have taken up the mantle of native nation building in the face of extreme stress from colonialism, assimilation policies, indigenous containment practices, and the changing times.

Wallace’s Stages of a Revitalization Movement

When the typical “pattern” of native nation building undertaken in Indian Country is examined, there are tenets which seem analogous to the steps laid out in Anthony Wallace’s 1956 model of revitalization movements. In his model, Wallace lays out a series of steps which outline the process of the development and results of a revitalization movement in indigenous communities. These steps include:

1. “Steady State”: a period of generally satisfactory adaptation to a group’s social and natural environment.
2. A Period of Increased Individual Stress: In which the group is able to survive through its accustomed cultural behavior, changes in the social or natural environment frustrate the efforts of many people to obtain normal satisfactions of their needs.
3. A Period of Cultural Distortion: Changes in the group’s social or natural environment drastically reduce the capacity of accustomed cultural behavior to satisfy most persons’ physical and emotional needs.
4. A Period of Cultural Revitalization: (1) Reformulation of the cultural pattern, (2) its communication, (3) organization of a reformulated cultural pattern (4) adaptation of the reformulated pattern to better meet the needs and preferences of the group; (5) cultural transformation; (6) routinization, when the adapted reformulated cultural pattern becomes the standard cultural behavior for the group.

5. The new period of generally satisfactory adaptation to the group's changed social and/or natural environment (Wallace 1956: 268-270)

For Wallace, this formal model of the five stages of revitalization could be used to explain almost any instance of religious or cultural transformation, across time and place. (Vokes 2007:319) This sentiment is one that is shared, as Michael Phelan states “the revitalization model is a very powerful, universal formula for culture change, whether in a whole society or an organization, for groups that are threatened by forces with which their traditional cultural norms cannot cope.” (Phelan 2005:47)

**Defining “Culture”**

When we speak of culture, there is literally over 150 years of debate on the meaning of the term within anthropology and related fields. One of the older definitions that has served as a root for many of the following, comes from Tylor in 1871.

“Culture…is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor 1920 [1871]: 1)

This definition is very broad but has served as a starting point for further distillations of the concept of culture within anthropology in the last hundred years. As Tylor was a cultural evolutionist, as were many in his time, this tends to be a little tricky when we are referring to indigenous cultures. The cultural evolution theory endorsed by Tylor is racist at its foundation,
reflecting aspects of orientalism and moralism used to justify imperial motives and actions of colonial forces, including genocidal practices carried out against indigenous peoples. However, the over-arching definition does tend to hold when one refers to the concept of culture. One of the ways this is delineated is the “big C, little c” concept. When we speak of “Culture” we are looking at holistic, learned, shared, symbolic, and integrated behavior and ideas, often of a larger society (i.e.: Muskokean speakers vs Chickasha, Chahta, etc.). These are generally noticed first when encountering the alien society. When we look at “culture” on an individual basis, this refers to specific practices and ideas of an individual group. This can include language, social norms, behavioral norms, and beliefs. This is an oversimplification of course, but it is one of several techniques that serve to clarify the differences for first year anthropology students.

In Wallace’s writings, his use of the term culture fluctuates somewhere between these two concepts. In broadly referencing “culture” he often includes political, social, religious, and economic aspects and drivers of the indigenous societies he profiles. In this sense, political and governance issues fall under the collective term. Traditionally, many indigenous cultures in North America tied governance decisions and structure to their localized, “little c”, culture and belief systems. Governance and decision making have shaped the archaeological and historical record of indigenous cultures across the globe, and is a foundation of the definition of culture, specifically influencing the 1871 Tylor definition mentioned above and many foundational anthropological concepts of culture and society, and therefore influencing subsequent distillations.

As culture is a living thing, when we talk about the concept of a steady state as defined by Wallace, this does not mean there is no stress on the society during this period. To use Wallace’s organismic analogy, stress is what keeps things living, hearts pumping, and cultures
thriving. Without it, there would be little motivation for innovation or even daily functions of a society. As such, the concept of a steady state could instead be referred to as “manageable stress levels”, as fluctuations will naturally occur throughout a culture’s existence. By examining the path of a revitalization movement in this manner, it is easier to conceptualize how the various stages of the movement affects the culture during the process. As is shown, the steady state would represent a period of relative stability or manageable stress within the culture’s history.

Soon, various stressors begin to weigh on the culture, and some movement or unrest begins to take hold within the society, but the needs of the community are still being met and dealt with through traditional means. Next, cultural distortion begins to take hold as these traditional practices and checks start to fail the society in dealing with this new outside stress or change. This period sees the most unrest, as cultural practices and norms start to fail and new or alien aspects are introduced into the society as a means of adapting to the stressors. Following this period of cultural distortion is a generally reactionary period of cultural change where the new stressors are examined and, if all goes as planned, dealt with through these new cultural practices and beliefs. The final stage of Wallace’s model was one of the most difficult to achieve for many native nations in North America, as due to the rapid cultural change and contact during the colonial and subsequent periods, a “steady state” was a luxury not often afforded, and even then, not for long.

The steps in Wallace’s model of revitalization movements can be best understood by placing them in a visual model, which shows the “stress arc” the movements follow during the process as individual stressors increase from the manageable level and return following the revitalization and routinization of the new mazeway. (See Figure 1)
Figure 1 Visual representation of the "stress arc" of Wallace's Revitalization Movement Model

Utilizing this visual representation, the arc taken by many cultures during periods of revitalization can be readily seen and applied to various cases throughout history. This arc of cultural change represented in Wallace’s model, upon initial review, seems analogous to those experienced by native nations going through the process of nation building. In a broad sense of indigenous history, the steady state period would refer to the period before any kind of major catalyst, such as European contact or warfare, within the nation. The period of increased stress would apply to the period of change within the nation, such as confinement to reservations or the termination period in U.S. history. Social distortion would apply to the period of change instituted among the nation, such as those created as a result of the boarding school era. The period of cultural revitalization would apply to the change or implementation period of the nation building process, and finally, the new steady state would apply to when the changes have set in and become the new normal for the nation. When examining the five operations within the revitalization state, the critical role of the Native Nations Institute and similar programs within native nation building is clearly visible. These additional operations-communication,
organization, adaptation, cultural transformation, and routinization serve to communicate the movement throughout the culture and to others. (Borish 1998:240) In this manner, native nations undertaking nation building as well as organizations like the Harvard Project and the Native Nations Institute play a definitive role in both their own revitalizations and the spread of the process and the “stressor” of opportunity and possibilities of revitalization to other native nations.

Wallace’s model almost traditionally has been applied to religious movements or those driven by belief at their core. Movements like those of the Delaware prophet Neolin, the Seneca Handsome Lake, the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa, and even the Native American Church have all been classified as revitalization movements based off his model and explanation. While almost exclusively religious in nature or centered around a single prophetic figure, these movements, at their core, focus on the continuity of the culture while dealing with the outside stress necessitating the formation of the movements in the first place. In basic terms, they were an adaptation for survival in the minds of their adherents. While changing certain social systems and practices, they often strove to preserve the overall culture of their adherents through directly facing the stressors. In this way, the formation and adherence to revitalization movements is quite like the practice of nation building among indigenous groups in the United States. In almost all cases of nation building within native nations in the United States, there are changes to the governing structures and other aspects of society which are implemented to deal with new stimuli or situations affecting the group. Societies change over time, and the subversion of native culture by the governments of the United States and Canada in the last 250 years has only exacerbated the stressors faced by each individual native nation. In the face of these challenges, native nations have taken on the process of nation building to counteract colonialism and
subversion, focusing on ways to develop their nations to deal with modern issues and participate in the various intergovernmental relationships within North America and, more broadly, the world. Utilizing the types of revitalization movements as identified by Wallace, nation building in Indian country often takes the form of a vitalistic movement, where cultures adapt various aspects of an alien mazeway, or way of knowing, into their own to develop a system to deal with the new stressors. (Wallace 1956: 272) The rhetoric behind nation building is one of reviving and revitalization of indigenous cultures. It stands to point that these actions would be considered revitalization movements, not necessarily in exact definition, but in general classification. In the application of a framework outside of its perceived intended focus, there will always be fitment issues. In this vein, certain aspects of Wallace’s model must be slightly modified to apply to native nation building, but the structure is still there beneath the new exterior.

The Mazeway Concept

Wallace’s work has been lauded as a major early component in the psychological or cognitive anthropology movement which began in the 1950’s. Cognitive anthropology addresses the ways in which people conceive of and think about events and objects in the world, providing a link between human thought processes and the physical and ideational aspects of culture. (D’Andrade 1995:1) The concept of the mazeway as defined by Wallace referred to the individual’s mental image of the society and its culture. It acted as a mental map of how they fit into their own local and larger culture, as well as how the connections and order . It includes “perceptions of both the maze of physical objects (internal and external, human and non-human) and also all of the ways in which this maze can be manipulated by the self and others in order to minimize stress.” (Wallace 1956:266, D’Andrade 1995:17) Using an organic analogy and seeing
the individual as a part of the larger societal organism, Wallace reflected on the necessity of the individual to maintain a mental image of the system and how the parts worked together. “

“Furthermore, that regularity of patterned behavior which we call culture depends relatively more on the ability of constituent units autonomously to perceive the system of which they are a part, to receive and transmit information, and to act in accordance with the necessities of the system, than on any all-embracing central administration which stimulates specialized parts to perform their function.” (Wallace 1956: 265)

The mazeway serves to regulate the individual and ultimately the group within the framework of the culture they collectively created. It is a necessary governor for the individual’s role within society, and ultimately, the society itself. Through the modification of the individual and collective mazeway as a result of revitalization, the society shifts the location of the “landmarks” in their mental maps and adjusts the cultural organization along with the roles and duties of the individual within it. In the process of native nation building, nations often shift or change aspects of their culture, from their governance style or structure, the types of enterprises and industries that are seen as culturally legitimate, and even the judicial practices within the group. This cultural change, whether immediate or drawn out over time, affects their mazeway and how they relate within their society and the world around them.

The similarities between the changes taken on by many native nations can certainly be equated to those undertaken by the founders and followers of various revitalization movements throughout history. When faced with a stressor, whether from outside or even within the group, there comes a point where the system is changed to account for the increased pressure while either maintaining as much of the previous mazeway as feasible or adapting aspects of the alien mazeway. By examining this contention on native nation building in North America, this work explores this correlation between the processes involved in revitalization movements and native nation building, and, using the classifications laid out by Wallace in his seminal works on the
subject, explains how the typical process of nation building in the larger part of the last century has constituted a semi-secular revitalization movement, specifically focusing on the mazeway reformation undertaken by native nations during the process.

The reasoning behind adding the “semi-secular” qualification to the revitalization movement definition of nation building lies in the lack of a clear separation of Native American spirituality and nation building. As stated previously, the larger portion of actions identified as revitalization movements based on Wallace’s theory in the past 60 years could be classified as religious movements, although the changes instituted affect all aspects of the society, including governance and international dealings. The process of nation building within native nations, while not necessarily driven by religion or religious entities, is very often influenced by these forces due to the interwoven nature of Native American spirituality and culture, governance, and decision-making. The complex mazeways of indigenous nations, especially historically, contained a major foundational building block of what is commonly identified as spirituality, situating the society and the individual within the world around them and their worldview. In the nation building model, spirituality often plays a key part in developing a culturally specific answer to nation building problems as well as developing a cultural match in indigenous governance. The role of various spiritualties within native governance has even been reinforced by the U.S. Congress. In the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1964 (25 U.S.C. §§ 1301-1304) many provisions of the American Bill of Rights were applied to American Indian nations, however the key points situating what type of government they would have as well as the establishment clause were left out intentionally, giving native nations the opportunity to identify what type of governmental structure would work for them. It is important to remember these differences when
evaluating native nation building and to understand the religious components of nation building in how it would be considered a modern revitalization movement.

In Wallace’s model revitalization movements are, in essence, transitory or liminal forms which serve to transform a culture from one steady state to the next, leading to his classification of the phenomenon as a “process.” However, more recent scholarship argues that the form can tend to be open ended when dealing with transnational issues. (Vokes 2007;322-3) This duality is shown when examining native nation building. Many attempts at native nation building do not necessarily take a straight line. There are starts, stops, U-turns, and re-evaluations which occur constantly within all revitalization movements, but the end goal is the same. The primary focus is developing a system which will deal with stressors placed on the society more effectively after the former system has fallen short.

The stressors identified in Wallace tend to be deprivation events, where the stress deprives the culture of or restricts access to a necessity. Joel Martin identifies that emergent transnational connections can introduce to a society a range of stresses that do not always conform to the model of deprivation forwarded by Wallace. In some instances, they certainly result in various sorts of deprivations as the cases cited above show. However, just as likely, new transnational connections might also introduce “stress,” within a given socio-cultural context, by widening the range of opportunities available to members of that society. For example, the introduction of trade goods and weaponry in North America by European nations drastically affected the lifeways of many native nations across the continent through the introduction of new technology, competition, and alliances, as well as new trades and societal roles through the impetus of the European fur trade. (Vokes 2007:321, Martin 2004:67-8) Taking this into account, the stressors placed on the culture can come from a truly wide variety of sources. Even
understanding the range of opportunities available or the successes of other cultures in similar circumstances could in fact lead to an increase in stress on the society. This type of influence can be seen within native nations undertaking native nation building and is likely a major driver behind the massive success the Harvard Project, the Native Nation Institute, and many other programs aiming at educating or spreading awareness about native nation building and economic development practices all over the world. The spread of information and ideas on what is possible after centuries of colonialism, assimilation, and historical trauma and the subsequent effects on indigenous societies has led hundreds across the globe to seek out ways to reorganize their society to a more effective and culturally matched system. This is the core of the revitalization concept.

Social and cultural changes are a given within all societies, but the deliberate action and modification of the community mazeway involved in a revitalization movement is what sets it apart from the more drawn-out processes of acculturation. (Wallace 1956:265) In taking direct agency and attempting to change a situation or deal with circumstances, indigenous nations exercise their sovereignty and create an intentional movement instead of a circumstantial event. This is a key aspect in native nation building. Native nations take deliberate steps toward fostering real change at the governmental and societal level through the nation building process and work to establish more effective national systems, creating a better situation for their culture in the present and leading toward the future. These deliberate steps taken to change the system to benefit the nation’s current culture and reinvigorate or restore society are a major part of what classifies these actions as revitalization movements.
Chapter 2: Nation Building during the Early Republic Period: Tsalagi Ayeli

Many native nations have likely experienced these types of movements throughout deep time, and the archeological record often indicates this change. For example, the Ohio Valley saw major changes during the Hopewell Period and later, in the Southeastern United States, aspects of cultural design and symbols collectively known as the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex (SECC) began to appear in the record around the Mississippian Period. This period also sees a drastic increase in public works and structures which are often deemed of religious significance such as mounds and the "Mississippian layout" for town structure, which is not found in the same regions prior to this period, and at the earliest shows up at sites such as Pinson Mounds in Jackson, Tennessee which dates to the Middle Woodland Period. (Snow 2012:93) These changes denote a massive shift in cultural patterns in the Southeast when compared to previous epochs. While it would take massive leaps to attempt identifying the various stages of revitalization within these prehistoric and protohistoric indigenous cultures, the drastic changes in iconography and structures can be seen when examining the archaeological record. Many of the vestiges of the SECC iconography can be seen within the cultures of protohistoric native nations from the Southeast including the Muskokean groups, the Cherokee, and even some of the Algonquian speakers in the Mississippi and Ohio Valley, and were recorded historically during contact with groups in the 16th and 17th century. This type of cultural shift is identifiable throughout North America in many different cultures through time. When examining the archaeological record, often these major shifts in material culture and iconography are used to mark changes in period or phase of culture in one manner or another. This is especially visible in areas with written languages, such as Central America. While not exact as far as dating, these shifts can show when a major ideological change occurs within the society. Archaeologically
major cultural shifts are typically identified, specifically from one governance and settlement structure to another following massive stress events, including disaster such as famine, drought, and warfare. (Wallace 1957: 22-26). The mazeway reformation required for these changes to occur indicates a major cultural and ideological shift in a short time frame compared to other methods of cultural change, such as cultural drift, adaptation, and evolution. It is the deliberate and quick change which sets revitalization apart from other long-term methods of cultural change. While it is difficult to pinpoint the kinds of rapid cultural and ideological shift associated with revitalization movements like that of Handsome Lake among the Haudenosaunee in the pre- Colombian archaeological record, examining the historical record shows the pattern associated with this type of movement. The case studies utilized by Wallace in his own research transpired in the colonial and Early Republic period of United States history, primarily between 1760 and 1830.

The challenge comes in identifying the utilization of native nation building practices as defined today. While this most certainly went on within indigenous groups since time immemorial, identifying this type of movement archaeologically is highly improbable. However, when we look at the historical record, actions taken by indigenous nations in North America can show the impact of these practices. While most of the available literature focuses on native nation building between the Termination Period to the present, native nations historically went through the same processes in reaction to changing times and stressors. One of the earliest examples of this change that is well documented was the steps taken by the Cherokee Nation in the Early Republic period of American history, which dates between 1780 and around 1830. The 18th century saw drastic changes along the frontier and with interactions between native nations and European colonial forces. The Seven Years War saw a drastic shift in relations as the French
were removed from the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes Region, bringing nations who had sided with the British to a higher stance and punishing many who had sided with the French. This only exacerbated the effects of the Beaver Wars in the region. Following the implementation of the Proclamation Line in 1763, native nations on the frontier experienced a small relief from the constant colonial pressure of the British colonists along the Appalachian Mountains and eastward, but it was short lived. Those groups who had been in constant contact with the colonists, especially those situated in or near the Appalachian region, saw increased pressure as the colonists pushed the line as far as possible through the Treaties of Hard Labor, Lochaber, and Fort Stanwix in the following years.

The Revolutionary War saw tremendous conflict between the Cherokee and colonists in the region. The Cherokee retained their alliance with the British, choosing the lesser of two evils between the crown and the colonists, who had been ignoring crown rulings on the frontier since the end of the Seven Years War. The fighting on the southern front was brutal, and retaliations by colonists ravaged many southeastern towns, especially in the Appalachian regions. The Cherokee suffered tremendous losses of property during this period, with several villages completely decimated through attacks and multiple capitol burned during and after the war. It was during this time that a major rift developed within the nation. Centered in the Overhill towns in what is now Tennessee, the leader Dragging Canoe, son of Cherokee speaker, or “King” Ada-gal’kala (Little Carpenter) led forces of Cherokee and other Southeastern nations in attacks against the English settlers and later Americans during and after the Revolutionary War. In 1776, following several military setbacks and reprisal attacks, many of the Cherokee towns sought peace with the colonists. The Overhill Cherokee, led by Dragging Canoe, did not agree with this stance, and violently reacted to any encroachments into their territory. In the winter of 1776-7,
they retreated down the Tennessee River away from encroachment into a protected area on the Chickamauga Creek, establishing 11 new towns in the region and effectively creating a separate Cherokee group, breaking away from the council and the peace seekers. (Malone 1956:38-45) This split lasted through 1809, when the reunification was formalized in council. During the Cherokee-American War, the Chickamauga towns caused tremendous unrest on the frontier and led the United States to pressure the main nation to develop some sort of centralized power in hopes both of stripping power from Dragging Canoe and his successors after his death in 1792, as well as creating a more formal centralized power to deal with directly instead of the town and clan system which often overruled the speaker, who held no real power over the actions of the Cherokee in other towns, ultimately serving as a messenger or mouthpiece between the United States and the council. (Reid 2006:57-62)

In the years following the end of the Revolutionary War, the fledgling United States government attempted to exert sovereignty over the native nations in the West. In a show of force as well as one of tense relations, they pushed for formal relations to be established with their former enemies and British allies in the Southeast. The Treaty of Hopewell in 1785 recognized United States protection over Cherokee territory and the traders and whites travelling there. The treaty made sure to exclude them from any clan retaliation tradition for murder, leaving prosecution for those types of crimes to the federal system. The treaty recognized importance of trade and relations between the Cherokee and the United States and put it at a premium in the negotiations. The treaty allowed the Cherokee to evict peoples within their boundary who were not welcome, recognizing their claim to those lands officially and by committing to the treaty, the United States recognized the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation and their rights within their own boundaries. The Treaty was very short lived, and was quickly
breached, leading to a cry for reprisal. In the time following the end of the Revolutionary War, the United States adopted a policy toward native nations who had sided with the British which treated them as conquered peoples, placing them in a status which was less than their allies. Henry Knox, the United States Secretary of War under President Washington, recognized the issue with this policy, especially seeing the very real threat of armed resistance or attack by groups on the frontier, and quickly worked to modify the policy to one of co-existence instead of outright dominance. Knox viewed the breach of the Hopewell Treaty as a serious offence to the dangerous nations in the Southeast, and pushed for the ratification of the Holston Treaty, supplanting the failed Hopewell Treaty, and readjusting the boundaries to fit the demands of the Cherokee. He sought to develop a somewhat peaceful coexistence with the nations in West, one of “expansion with honor”, and officially established this policy in 1789 to deal with native nations as a potential military threat instead of conquered peoples and to recognize more rights both to soil and to sovereignty, leading up to the Trade and Intercourse Acts in the following years. Importantly, the Holston Treaty included a provision in Article 14 establishing a civilization program among the Cherokee, calling for gratuities from the federal government for implements, seed, and instruction in the “correct” manner of farming, specifically cash and row-crop agriculture, as opposed to traditional methods which had served them for hundreds of years. (McLoughlin 1986:21-22; Malone 1956:33-36)

While these steps served to alleviate some tensions between the Cherokee and the United States, the tensions caused by the new settlers moving into the region continued to grow during this period. North Carolina’s cession of what would become Tennessee and those of several states bordering Appalachia to fulfill Veteran land claims led to increased conflict between Southeastern groups and settlers in the years between 1790 and 1810. In this early period of the
United States’ existence, many states did not see themselves as a unified nation, but a series of sovereign entities. Indeed, the Anti-Federalist party was primarily based in the agrarian South and West during the Early Republic period, with the epicenter of the party situated in the traditional territories of the Cherokee, Creek, and other southeastern native nations. The western states especially did not see the Treaties of Hopewell and Holston as valid actions by the Federal government at the time, and loathed the impacts of the Trade and Intercourse Acts in the 1790’s. These actions restricted state’s rights to deal with native nations and were perceived as an overstep by the federal government into policy many believed should be managed at the state level depending on their individual situations. (McLoughlin 1986:35) This was especially true in areas like Tennessee and Alabama, who were suffering the most from retaliatory attacks and raids during the post war years, in what became known as the Cherokee-American War. Often cited as the Chickamauga Wars, the followers of Dragging Canoe continued their aggressive stance toward encroachment following the formal end of the Revolutionary War. This became increasingly problematic to the United States as many settlers pushed past the former boundaries in search of new land and many states established veterans claims in areas which were claimed as Chickamauga and Overhill Territory. Agents to the Cherokee in the early 1790’s pleaded with the council and headmen to reach out to the Chickamauga to strengthen relationships with the group and to urge them to end hostilities toward settlers. A series of brutal attacks by white militia and frontiersmen in 1793-4 effectively weakened the Chickamauga, destroying two towns and killing hundreds.

**Centralized Governance**

In late 1794, the Treaty of Tellico Blockhouse formally ended the Chickamauga Wars, and led the Cherokee to take a critical look at their governance structure. Many connected
mixed-race council members and prominent citizens pushed for a formal organization of the governance structure, understanding that the decentralized system of the past no longer worked in the face of ever-encroaching colonists and frontier settlers. The United States required quick action when discussing land cessions, which were requested at ever more frequent rates. Traditionally, the Cherokee council was required to meet in the open for all to attend, which was difficult with towns scattered across a wide area as they were. Demanding agents frequently requested meetings with the full council, placing a strain on many and increased stress on members to attend to matters at Ustanali, the new capitol following the destruction of Echota. A centralized system was needed to organize the various towns and to speak with one voice for the nation. In late 1794, the council met and discussed the merits of having a standing government to deal with the United States. One of the main talking points was the concept of a Principal Chief, an appointed executive who would effectively be a point of contact between the United States agent and the council. These direct steps in organizing the centralized Cherokee Nation mark the start of native nation building in the Early Republic, a process which would continue at a rapid pace through the next fifty years and beyond. (McLoughlin 1986:59)

The proposed system was a drastic departure from the traditional governance structure utilized by the Yunwiya for generations. The traditional system revolved around clans and towns, with a two-council system governing the towns and the people. The white council handled the day-to-day business of the towns during peace time, while the red council stepped in during times of war. Each had their own specialties and recognized the authority of the other during their respective times of influence. Within these councils, generally one or several individuals would be chosen to deal with the colonial forces and leadership following contact, essentially serving as a point of contact for the entire council. Eventually, the Cherokee divided
into the Upper Towns and Lower Towns, and an individual selected as the *Uku*, or "beloved man," was chosen to lead the council in these dealings with foreign governments. This developed over time, as the European concept of "chiefs" was pressed. In colonial history, the British and later the Americans often pressed for a point of contact with various Native allies to avoid dealing with larger groups or traditional matriarchal power structures. In their dealings with some groups, the United States government often appointed individuals as a principal chief or leader of a group, as was the case with Sitting Bull and the Lakota in the 1870's. This often led to controversy within groups with a relatively flat governance structure such as representative councils or tiospayes and did so with the Cherokee at the time. The concept of a single executive was not traditional within the society. Everyone had representation through the council members of each town, and the division of expertise through the two-council system meant that each member concentrated on their roles within the community during their respective times of influence. The concept of a Cherokee chief or emperor was non-existent prior to European contact. In fact, most native nations across North America had no true “royalty” in the European sense of the word, but the early historical record often refers to them as such, generally in an effort to convey the importance of their position within the foreign society in a way the European readers could comparatively comprehend. (Conley 2008:16)

**The Concept of a Chief**

The first record of any kind of Cherokee principal speaker was in 1721, when the Governor of South Carolina met with 37 “chiefs” to discuss land cessions and convinced them to name Wrosetawasatow “King” to speak for the nation instead of having to convince the various towns individually. These headmen did not consider Wrosetawasatow to be a monarch or even much of a leader. He was simply the mouthpiece for the council, contrary to what the governor
was aiming for. (Mooney 1975:24) In 1730, Sir Alexander Cumming convinced Cherokee to designate Moytoy an “Emperor,” and the English and, later, Americans recognized a succession of speakers through the 1780’s who were said to speak for the nation but held no real decision-making power aside from the will of the council. (McLoughlin 1986:17) Even the concept of having a single speaker led to contention between the Cherokee in the years leading up to the shift. In 1788, the Cherokee were divided both socially and politically due to the Lower and Upper town rift stemming from the Chickamauga Wars. In 1788 the Cherokee council was re-established at the town of Ustanali, near present day Calhoun, Georgia, after several devastating attacks on the Overhill town of Chota, which had served as the council seat. The council appointed Little Turkey as Great Beloved Man of the whole nation, placing him in the speaker role for the council following the murder of Corntassel and several other prominent leaders during a diplomatic mission earlier in the year. Uskwa’li-Gu’ta (Hanging Maw) claimed right to the title as a descendant of Moytoy and as the First Beloved Man of the Overhill Towns following Corntassel’s demise. The United States sought to recognize Hanging Maw as the speaker for the Cherokee in the next few years, even though the council did not, leading to a growing rift between the Upper and Lower Cherokee towns. (Malone 1956:75, Lowrie and Clark Indian Affairs 271)

This division is one of the main reasons behind the push for unification between the lower and upper towns in 1794. The decentralized nature of the leadership among the Cherokee in the six years prior to the restructuring meant that dealing with the United States became precarious, especially with Hanging Maw, a warrior who had served under Dragging Canoe, at the helm of many negotiations and opposing the council, leading to increased stress on the nation’s governance systems. The period saw a drastic increase in violence along the frontier,
especially in the Overhill region, which was openly targeted for retaliation by militia and frontier vigilante groups during the Chickamauga Wars. The back-and-forth nature of the violence in the region meant settlers were being targeted more frequently by warrior parties from the Chickamauga faction and their allies, which was a sizeable force by the 1790, having drawn in supporters from the Creek, Chickasaw, Shawnee, and other Southwestern nations, including some Cherokee from the “peace faction.” In trying to mitigate the violence, the division caused increased troubles, as talks with one faction did not generally reach the other, and the role of the council was increasingly tried as the violence raged across the frontier. It was clear that a union needed to be drawn out, and the U.S. agents to the Cherokee pushed for a centralization both to clear up the leadership question and to determine a point of contact which would serve for all the towns.

The Cherokee decision to unify the towns under a national council and the creation of the role of Principal Chief as one of individual executive power marked the beginning of the surge of nation building which occurred in the Early Republic period. The election of Little Turkey as Principal Chief shows a deliberate attempt to deal with external and internal stressors of the time. The creation of a national council shows the focus on unifying the nation as one voice in dealing with colonial pressures and the young American government and containing the stressors which drove the nation apart in the decades before it. Through the creation of the national council, the Cherokee officially created the Tsalagi Ayeli, or Cherokee Nation, which would serve until its dissolution in 1907 as a result of Oklahoma statehood and the Curtis Act of 1898. The council rose to be a driving force in the unification and changes undertaken by the Cherokee in the next few decades and took on a role of policing itself until formal systems were put in place. When Tal-tsu’tsa (Doublehead), former speaker of the nation and leader of the
Chickamauga, was convicted of taking bribes in negotiations with the United States and completing under the table land deals with Indian Agent Return Meigs in 1807, he was executed, and restrictions were placed on the abilities of leadership to make land cessions outside of the council. (Mooney 1982:85) This restriction was officially formalized in 1818 and in the “Blood Law” of 1829, making it a capital crime to cede any Cherokee territory without the consent and agreement of all members of the council.

**Law and Order**

In this same period, the Cherokee council set out to establish law and order among the nation. The period surrounding the end of the Chickamauga Wars still saw conflict with frontier settlers, and horse stealing from both sides was a major problem. In this time, a horse could be the success or failure of one’s entire farm, so this was a major offense. In 1797, the council, at the urging of their local Indian Agent, set out to create a law which would fill in the gray areas which fell outside of tribal and traditional law, much of which was unwritten at the time. The encroachment of non-Indian society around the Cherokee territory led to many issues which fell outside of traditional law, so this step was a major force in establishing order within the territory. Initially, the nation paid individuals to hunt down criminals and bring them in for trial, effectively creating a marshal or bounty hunting system. In 1799, this was taken a step further through aide from the United States. The agent at the time urged the Congress to provide funding for the establishment of a paid standing police force among the Cherokee and received authorization to bring it to the council. In 1799, the national council established the Cherokee Lighthorse regulators, a standing light cavalry police force charged with maintaining law and order within the territory. Following the election of 1800, the U.S. federal government dropped funding for their half of the pay, so policing became sporadic through 1808, when the national
council took up the issue, establishing a national police force paid through the nation itself, something that did not exist traditionally outside of clan action and internal policing.

(McLoughlin 1986:45-6)

**Planter-Elites and Educational Reform**

During this time, the Cherokee saw a rise of the mixed-blood leaders of the Early Republic period. With their proximity to American and colonial settlements, the Cherokee had extensive dealings with white settlers for generations. In the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, the nation saw a rise in the number of intermarried whites within Cherokee territory. While some did not seek to be a part of the culture and aimed at personal gain, others wholly adopted the culture, even being adopted into clans and raising children somewhat traditionally. By the time of the council in 1794, several influential mixed blood or intermarried Cherokee helped to drive the nation toward closer relations with Americans. They counseled that outright resistance to any kind of acculturation would potentially be detrimental to the nation and their relations with the American government. Many of these leaders had been born of mixed parentage, often to traders or diplomats located within the territory. As Cherokee lineage runs matrilineally, they were considered Cherokee and had all the rights of a citizen, and many had been raised within the culture itself. One of the main differences between these mixed-blood diplomats was their education. Many of the influential mixed blood leaders of the time had been afforded an education by colonial and frontier standards. Often, these leaders were bilingual and served as interpreters between the council and the agents of the American government who requested a meeting. Through their experiences and education, many of this group rose to power and wealth within the nation in the Early Republic period, establishing trading companies or political clout through their experience with intergovernmental affairs. (McLoughlin 1986:31-2; Malone
In the first decade of the 1800’s, the Cherokee sought to take advantage of Article 14 of the Holston Treaty, seeking assistance in the form of farming equipment, training, and aid to further the nation’s status. At the same time, the nation was approached by Moravians seeking to establish a mission to provide education to Cherokee children. The council approved their request in 1800 and the Moravian mission was constructed in 1801, beginning with a rough start, but later flourishing with the aid of wealthy mixed blood trader James Vann and many others. (McLoughlin 1986:46-7) Traditionally, education was handled experientially within the family and clan units in individual towns, but following the influx of outside stress on the society and the rise in the need for literacy with the number of treaties and deals carried out between Americans and Cherokees, many parents, especially intermarried whites, sought to educate their children. Some adults even took steps to become literate during the time, both English and Cherokee speakers, eventually leading to the invention of the Cherokee syllabary by Sequoya (George Gist) in 1821. This change in educational outlooks led to the first generation of literate Cherokee to be educated on Cherokee territory and paved the way for the influential generation of John Ridge, Elias Boudinot, and Chief John Ross.

The change in educational attitudes marked a shift in the Cherokee outlook at the time. Understanding that the encroachment of American society, and the American’s reluctance to learn Cherokee, meant future Cherokee would have to be literate and speak English to deal with many aspects of daily life outside of their own communities. This led many more affluent Cherokee to send their children to schools, either boarding schools of the missions or even in the case of John Ross’ father, to establish their own schools on their property for their own and local children with the blessing of the council. (Malone 1956:55-56) This shift in educational drive among the Cherokee marks and ideological shift in the society. While many focused on various
educations as ways to provide opportunities for employment and bilingualism, an undercurrent of development often ran within their actions. Many affluent Cherokee males went on to become educated in business, law, and aspects of international policy during the early 1800’s, often with the support of the nation and even the United States. Elias Boudinot and John Ridge, for instance, attended a boarding school in Connecticut under scholarship from the War Department. John Ross attended several schools, becoming a successful trading post and plantation owner prior to his election to the National Council in 1817. The new generation of mixed-blood, educated, English speaking Cherokee would be the major catalyst in the revitalization of the nation in the early 1800’s.

In 1809, the Separation period finally came to an end when the Chickamauga were brought back into the nation in a unification ceremony at the Green Corn Festival, following several years of threats to divide the nation in two and opposition between the Upper and Lower Towns. The lower towns had played major roles in the early national council, with the first three principal chiefs coming from the region and having fought under Dragging Canoe at one point or another. The return of the Chickamauga meant that the Cherokee would provide a fully unified front when dealing with the United States, but it also brought the influence of older, prominent, acculturated Chickamauga and Lower Town Cherokee to the council, which led to conflict with the younger Upper Town leaders. (Champagne 1992:96-102) The unification period saw a new directive for the nation and fully centralized national council set about taking on issues affecting all Cherokee, from the push toward removal coming from states bordering Cherokee territory to the threat of full assimilation and loss of Cherokee traditions.

As with any native nation building, change came slow to the Cherokee system. In the period between 1794 and 1817, many of the traditional aspects of the Cherokee permeated the
decisions of the national council. There have been arguments that the planter-merchant class
came to dominate the nation during this time, but wealth did not necessarily equate to power
during the period. (see Shadburn 1990; McLoughlin 1986:66) The majority of this class who
were brought into political realms were brought there because of their expertise in business, law,
and predominantly because of their bilingualism and connections. Many were rebuffed or
deposed when they moved too far away from traditional values, and many who pushed for
assimilation, removal, or land cessions were removed from office or killed in cases of flagrant
disregard such as Doublehead’s. The clan system within Cherokee society at the time provided
legitimacy to the national council through their support and the maintenance of traditional values
and roles. Cherokee societal spheres were held separate from the political and judicial sphere.
Issues of kinship and clan relations were not taken up by the council, and clan mothers and
leadership were not brought into judicial discussions or decisions. Essentially, the society
retained the division between the two branches governing societal relations, one within the
traditional realm and one within the political and judicial, and the system was relatively solid
during this period as a result. While the old tradition of autonomous towns and the two-council
system had been modified, the system still worked in much of the same way while taking on the
new issues of American encroachment and international relations. This differed drastically from
the actions taken by other Southeastern nations at the time, who did not differentiate between the
roles of the council in judicial and social matters. The separation of polity from kinship and
cultural matters arguably sent the Cherokee on a more direct path toward a revitalized
sovereignty leading into the removal crisis of 1817-1840. (Champagne 1992: 105-7, 128-9)
Bicameral Legislature and Written Law

In 1817, the Cherokee Nation took steps to modify their governance structure to deal with the increasing pressure from outsiders on the nation. The establishment of the bicameral legislature marked a drastic change in the legislature of the nation, moving more toward a system of checks and balances similar to that of the United States Congress at the time. The new upper house, or “Standing Committee” would consist of 13 officials, serving two-year terms and subject to re-election, who were selected by the council. The council would serve as the lower house and provide oversight to the actions of the upper house, whose role was to oversee “affairs of the Cherokee Nation” including international relations with the United States. In this same resolution, the nation established electoral districts to even out representation on the council. (Malone 1956:77-8) In the coming years, the council would take actions to move even further toward a republic, establishing district governing structures which reported to the council and were charged with maintaining law and order within the districts. With the establishment of these judicial districts, the nation also established a system of four circuit judges, each presiding over two districts. (Malone 1956:81-82) The efficiency of the Cherokee system was observed by outsiders, including a missionary who reported that the execution of Cherokee law “meets with not the least hindrance from anything like a spirit of insubordination among the peoples.” (William Chamberlain in Malone 1956:82) In 1818, the nation set about recording Cherokee laws and issued a copy of the pamphlet to all head of families within the nation, ensuring the transparency of the law and the punishments for breaking them. This came as a result of the 1817 removal treaty with the United States, which was undertaken by a sub group of leaders who favored removal without authorization by the council, and led to the creation of the death penalty for ceding or selling Cherokee territory without authorization of the council, a law predating the
In 1820, under the leadership of the new mixed-race planter-elite class and visionaries like The Ridge, John Ross, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, the nation altered the structure of the council, restricting it to 32 members in the lower house. Previously, each town had been afforded representation of 4 to 6 men, and with a total of 50 or more towns at any given time, the meetings could be a little crowded. By restricting the representation to representative districts instead of individual towns, which by this point had fallen out of favor as the political center of the culture, they were able to rationalize proceedings and streamline the process. In the years between 1820 and 1826, the nation continued to take steps toward governance reform. In 1822, they formally established the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court to hear rulings appealed past the circuit courts. In 1823 the standing committee was given review privileges over the national council, evening out the balances between the two houses. In 1824, the council formally divested individual leaders of rights to make treaties, cede territory, and overrule council decisions, formally taking control of all questions of land, payments, and annuities nationally. In 1825, the
council ruled that the judiciary was independent of the council, formally ensuring checks 
between branches of the government. (Champagne 1992:135-137) With each council meeting it 
seemed that the nation was consistently working toward a more effective system of governance, 
one that could meet the rapidly changing circumstances facing the nation and provide a bridge 
between the assimilationist and traditional factions of the nation. This came to a head in 1826, 
with the proposal of the formal constitution of the Cherokee Nation.

The Constitution

In the Compact of 1802, Jefferson made assurances to the state of Georgia that the U.S. 
government would work toward the removal of the Cherokee to territories outside the state when 
the action would be most beneficial for the government to do so. By the 1820’s, Georgia had had 
够 enough waiting and began to take matters into their own hands. For years leading up to the early 
1820’s, Georgia had been applying pressure to the Cherokee, harassing citizens and making life 
difficult at every turn in an effort to force them to remove. In the early 1820’s, these efforts 
began to ramp up, and by 1825 they were at an all-time high. Cherokee lawmakers set out to 
determine ways to deal with the harassment and encroachment from a people who had already 
held a lottery for the lands within the Cherokee territory for when they were finally removed. 
This pressure led leaders to focus on the formal establishment of boundaries and the role of 
political sovereignty within the nation. In 1826, Chief Ross and several others proposed the 
formation of a formal constitution for the Cherokee Nation, outlining the governmental forms, 
checks and balances, accurate boundary descriptions, rights of citizens, and the legal makeup of 
the nation at the time, to be developed through a constitutional convention of 24 elected 
delegates in 1827. In July of 1827, the convention met in New Echota and outlined the articles of 
the constitution, which was ratified in 1828, creating one of the first formal indigenous
constitutional governments in the United States with a written constitution. Through the
constitution, lawmakers hoped that Americans would move past the stereotypical view of the
Cherokee as savages and would recognize their political and tribal sovereignty and the
complexity of their governing structure, which by this time mirrored closely the form of those of
western states and the United States government. The constitution created a formal document
outlining all the aspects of the governing system of the Cherokee Nation, making it so that there
was no question as to the roles, responsibilities, and limitations of the various offices and
branches. Interestingly, the nation included a provision calling for a review of the constitution at
least every 4 years, outlining streamlined methods to revise the document to fit the current
culture and their circumstances at the time, something even the United States constitution fell
short of including. Within the new constitution, the nation further internal differentiation of the
Cherokee governance system. Where the national committee had previously been appointed by
the council, the new system required the election of one committee member and three council
members per district. The committee was given veto powers over council rulings, and the chief
now had more of an executive role within the structure, charged with implementing laws
approved by the houses. Laws were passed encouraging education and establishing national
schools, strengthening law enforcement, and enumerating the rights of all Cherokee citizens.
(Champagne 1992: 138-142: Cherokee Constitution 1827) The enumeration of boundaries would
prove invaluable in the case of Worcester v. Georgia in 1832, establishing that the laws of
Georgia could not have force within the accurately described and demarcated boundaries of the
Cherokee territory, creating precedent for jurisdictional policy to this day.

Following the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States government increased
efforts to remove native nations to west of the Mississippi River. The Cherokee saw increased
pressure from the state of Georgia as well, including harassment by the Georgia Guard to affect the Nation’s ability to govern and bring challenge cases to court. (Mcloughlin 1986:438) The Cherokee Nation was strongly against further cessions of land, and following the Blood Law of 1829, it was a capital crime to cede Cherokee land without approval of the council. A faction of the Cherokee Nation planter and merchant class known as the Treaty Party decided to ignore the law and intentionally went against Chief Ross and the council in 1835, secretly signing the Treaty of New Echota with the United States. The treaty was immediately contested by Ross and the council, and was never ratified by the Cherokee council, but it was quickly approved and ratified as official by the Jacksonian Senate. After fighting against the validity of the illegally signed treaty, Chief Ross was finally forced to acquiesce and begin preparing the nation for removal, while continually pressing to stall the process. In 1838, the rest of the Cherokee were forcibly rounded up and marched to Oklahoma. When they arrived, the nation faced a major division, resulting in a back-and-forth war between the Treaty Party and Ross supporters after several murders and attacks against Treaty Party leaders were carried out under the Blood Law by Ross party supporters in the summer of 1839. (Mcloughlin1993: 1-58) Although under tense circumstances, the Old Settler Cherokee, consisting of the Arkansas band and Treaty Party members who had migrated immediately following the Treaty of New Echota, and the Cherokee who were forcibly removed reconnected and ratified a new constitution in 1839, combining the 1833 constitution of the Arkansas Cherokee and the 1827 Cherokee Nation constitution. The Cherokee Nation’s government and governance practices changed little in form and function between the ratification of the constitution in 1828 and the effective dissolution of the nation in 1907 following Oklahoma statehood. Throughout this period, the nation worked to develop programs which were beneficial to the nation as a whole and fit with the current culture of the
time, all the while maintaining aspects of tradition and unwritten tribal law as handed down by the clan mothers and traditional town councils prior to European invasion. During this time they developed and strengthened programs which helped the nation to prosper in the face of tremendous historical trauma and change. As Kevin Bruyneel puts it, the Cherokee existed in a “third space of sovereignty”, not only imagining changes to programs proposed by federal and state officials, but created, debated, and reformed their own social policies throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. (Reed 2016:14; Bruyneel 2007:27-64) Even after removal, when many non-Indians believe that the “Indian Problem” of the Eastern nations and questions of tribal sovereignty were a moot point, the Cherokee Nation still maintained the validity of their national governing structure and political and tribal sovereignty. (See Denson 2004 Demanding the Cherokee Nation)

This period of rapid change and the creation of the concept of the unified Cherokee Nation represents one of the earliest well documented cases of what has been defined as modern nation building. The movement effectively applied the Nation building approach as defined by Cornell and Kalt. The Cherokee Nation faced many of the same challenges modern nations face, such as expanding and defending tribal sovereignty, exercising political self-determination, social and cultural self-determination, and protecting the economic, social, and cultural well-being of its citizens. They had to assert decision making power in the face of Indian agents, colonial pressures, state interventions, and internal strife. They backed up their sovereignty by developing one of the first written indigenous constitutions and modern type of indigenous governance systems. They ensured that the division of social, kinship, and polity questions remained separate, but ensured that the structure matched and was backed by other aspects of the culture, including the traditional sectors of society and the clan system. The also had innovative
leaders such as John Ross, John Ridge, and many others who served as the driving force behind the adaptation of the governance system to the current political and cultural climate of the day, examining the development of the governance system from a strategic standpoint and firming it up against the pressures of the encroaching society around them. In taking these steps, they exercised true sovereignty, not asking agents for permission, but developing a system which would work for them and their contemporary culture at the time. The nation took agency in dealing with their own internal issues and focusing on international relations which were increasingly problematic and pressing in the Early Republic period, both with the United States and with former enemies and allies in the Southwest.

The nation also established an independent judiciary, set in motion a system of checks and balances and term limits, and a method for examining whether institutions were working for them at the time and a process to revise those every four years and ensuring that the governing structure could keep up with the cultural changes which were inevitable due to colonialism, cultural exchange, and assimilation. While understanding the role of culture within the governance structure, the nation looked to the future and the pressures surrounding them, beginning in 1794 and kicking into high gear following the crisis of 1817. While the nation building aspect of the Tsalagi Ayeli during the Early Republic period is a given, the question for the argument here lies in whether this constitutes a revitalization movement or not.

During this period, the Cherokee experiences or took part in several traditional “religious” revitalization movements of their own. The Cherokee Prophet or “Ghost Dance” movement between 1811 and 1813, White Path’s Rebellion in 1827, which was launched in response to the missionary presence in the territory and the council’s expulsion of White Path in 1825, and even Tenskwatawa’s Movement all had impacts on Cherokee society during the Early
Republic period. Many were aimed at resitng the acculturation which rapidly occurred during the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. While arguably these and even the Christian conversions and creation of the Cherokee Baptist denomination during this time period represent efforts to reconstruct society into a more workable design, the nation building process the Cherokee Nation went through during the same time period should also constitute a revitalization movement when using the definition provided by Wallace: “…a "deliberate, organized, and conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture.” (Wallace 1956:265)

In modifying their governance, social, educational, and even judicial system, the Cherokee undertook a revitalization movement to redefine their systems to better benefit their culture. The path they chose took a similar arc as defined in the introduction to this dissertation, proceeding through the 5 steps as outlined by Wallace. The period in the late 1700’s saw drastic changes for the Cherokee as a result of the deer skin trade and the resulting warfare in the Trans-Appalachian frontier. Colonial encroachment and land cessions served to ignite social stressors within the nation, which grew continually from internal and external processes and tensions, finally coming to a head in 1794, when the nation decided to look to a national form of governance instead of traditional town level structures. Over the next thirty years, the nation sought to modify their system of governance as well as cultural values to deal with the new stressors placed on the society, resulting in a modified societal system, retaining aspects of the old but modifying institutions to deal with the contemporary culture. At the same time, the stressors placed on the Cherokee during the Early Republic period were not all deprivation events. Many influences served to reveal new opportunity or challenges to the Cherokee during this period, especially the civilization programs and mission education systems of the Moravians and other Protestant groups. During the revitalization phase of the movement, the national
council sought to communicate the new changes and processes through the issuance of law pamphlets and the organization of a written constitution, organizing the new pattern officially and setting it into motion the following year. In the coming years, the nation went through the other three steps of the revitalization stage, adapting and routinizing the system until it was accepted as the new standard, even through further disruption because of removal and the Cherokee Civil War in Oklahoma, eventually returning to a period of satisfactory adaptation to their new surroundings and contemporary culture.

When examining the history, the choices made by the Cherokee Nation during this period represent both an expression of native nation building and a conscious revitalization movement undertaken to establish a more effective cultural practice through collective mazeway reformation. The stressors and trials of the period saw many major changes throughout Cherokee society, but ultimately the nation created a system that was ahead of the other Southeastern nations and one that served as an example for many others which followed, effectively utilizing building blocks and checkpoints which are still used in native nation building today.
Chapter 3: Changing the Game: The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

Following over century of questionable and often outright genocidal Indian policy by the United States, the passage and implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 proved to be a double-edged sword in Indian Country. For those Native Nations who chose to accept the act, it allowed for the redesign of governance structures and the creation of documents which would serve as the basis of new systems in the wake of the General Allotment Act and many other damaging or limiting aspects of the United States Indian Policy in the late 19th century. This proved to be beneficial for some, but for many it was yet another limiting factor in their fight to maintain or reclaim true tribal sovereignty. Section 16 of the act called for the Secretary of the Interior to approve all major changes to the constitutions and governing structures in what was colloquially known as the Secretarial Clause. These approvals generally favored a predetermined set of boilerplate governance structures, leaning toward business administration instead of governance models. These limitations practically stunted the development of many nations and the restrictions of governance styles led to many problems. However, in the 1960’s and 70’s, many native nations took it upon themselves to alter their constitutions, looking for ways around the requirement and ways to establish a form of government which made sense to them instead of one that was forced upon them. One such nation was the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

The Mississippi Choctaw are at the heart of arguably one of the most well-known success stories of native nation building since the 1960’s. Following their recognition in 1945, the nation had a rough road building into the powerhouse they are today in Central Mississippi, meeting in citizen’s basements for many years prior to what they refer to as their “Era of Change.” (Peterson
The period leading up to recognition was an incredibly stressful time for the nation, and the memory of that time likely led to their drive to remodel their system into a more effective structure to work for them instead of the agency.

The Mississippi Band of the Choctaw originated out of the Choctaw citizens who opposed removal and remained in Mississippi following the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek and the rest of the Choctaw Nation’s removal. The removal period effectively split the nation, and those remaining in Mississippi faced constant efforts toward their own removal to Oklahoma through the Civil War and into the early 20th century. Following the Civil War, most Choctaw occupied marginal lands in Mississippi which were often owned by out of state investors. Effectively squatters, the communities they developed centered around churches, which also served as the schoolhouse. These communities closely resembled the rural Freedmen and southern white communities surrounding them, with distinctly Choctaw characteristics such as language, social customs and practices like stickball, and traditional foodways. (Peterson 1992:140-1;Buice 1986:149-150) During the application of the General Allotment Act to the Removal Tribes in Oklahoma following passage of the Curtis Act amendment in 1898, the commission sought to encourage Mississippi Choctaw to move to Oklahoma to receive lands guaranteed in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. As a result of this program, numerous communities broke apart and left Mississippi for Oklahoma in the early 1900’s. Unfortunately, Oklahoma was even less hospitable to many, and their claims were lost in one manner or another, leading many to return to Mississippi to desolate remains of communities that had disbanded. The reformed, decentralized communities faced increased challenges, which were exacerbated by the influenza outbreak in 1917. The outbreak was incredibly devastating within the rural communities in Central Mississippi, prompting federal intervention and, coupled with
the increased pleas for help from the Choctaw, led to the formation of the Mississippi Choctaw Agency in 1918. (Peterson 1992:141; Buice 1986:150)

**Recognition**

The agency focused on providing services to the remnants of the Mississippi Choctaw, but like many federal programs of the time, their focus was on their assimilation instead of their recognition. They attempted to re-concentrate groups in smaller rural settlements around schools as had been the norm prior to the Oklahoma Allotment, purchasing farm plots around the settlements to further this process in a farm credit system, mirroring the sharecropping carried out over the past two generations. The agency was not committed to establishing a centralized reservation during this time period but, following the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act and the failure of the farm credit system, efforts to establish a reservation became feasible through the amount of land titles held by the agency due to forfeiture. In 1945, the Mississippi Band of the Choctaw Indians was formally recognized following the creation of the reservation and the approval of their constitution under IRA regulations. Under this constitution, the council had very little control over reservation affairs, serving effectively as an advisory board to the agency superintendent, who made final decisions on their behalf. Over the next 20 years, the tribe saw no major improvements in their living situation or relations with the superintendent, with the median level of schooling sitting at only three years and two thirds of heads of households being either unemployed or working as temporary farm workers. (Peterson 1992:141-2) The rise of mechanized farming in the 1950’s and 60’s meant even less Choctaw were finding work in the region, with a decline of 65 percent during the 1950’s in Neshoba County alone, which was in the heart of Choctaw country. (Buice 1986:156) This led the tribe to be targeted for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Direct Employment Program, often referred to as
urban relocation, which had as a measure of its unstated agenda to be used as a means for further assimilation across Indian Country and a dispersal of tribes away from the reservations.  

(Peterson 1972)

**Era of Change**

1964 served as a turning point for the Mississippi Choctaw in several ways. To start, a high school was established on the reservation, meaning students did not have to move to Indian schools in Oklahoma or North Carolina or look for public schools outside the region after refusing to attend substandard schools segregated for African American students in the area. 1964 also saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act, meaning positions were opened for Choctaw workers in some local factories. The period also saw the return of many Choctaw who had higher education and military experiences, including two incredibly influential individuals who would change the relationship between the council and the agency and ultimately lead the Mississippi Choctaw into and through their “Era of Change,” challenging the status-quo and strengthening the nation’s tribal sovereignty. Philip Martin was elected as tribal chairman in 1964, after first entering tribal leadership in 1957. Martin had received a high school diploma in Cherokee, North Carolina before entering the Air Force where he served for the next ten years. Robert Benn also returned during this period. Benn had received a degree in Speech from Mississippi State College and had served as an officer in the Navy in the Pacific and at New Orleans before returning to Mississippi and later becoming the first non-teaching professional Mississippi Choctaw on the Choctaw Agency. (Peterson 1992:143; Benn 1976)

Martin, Benn, and their supporters had a different vision for the Mississippi Choctaw and set about pushing for a more influential role in the daily affairs of the reservation and the people. In 1966, they established the Community Action Agency and began applying for federal grants
to assist in their development ideas. The council refocused efforts toward reclaiming control of reservation affairs and modifying the system established under the IRA constitution. When the grant was awarded, Martin stepped down to run the Community Action Agency (CCAA) and Emmett York stepped in to take the chairman position. Together, they worked in concert to implement changes through the council and the CCAA. In this same period, tribal law enforcement was established through the Agency and a Choctaw court was established, presided over by a Choctaw judge. (Buice 1986:158)

One of the earliest programs implemented was their assistance program. Using “poverty program” funds allocated to the nation through the Office of Economic Opportunity programs and federal assistance they developed a series of aggressive social programs to address the situation of many citizens on the reservation. These varied programs included Head Start and early education initiatives, community health aides, food distribution and aid programs, and social services. The council also focused on developing advisory councils for various programs to foster an active voice in decisions affecting the nation and bring more citizens into community organizations. (Peterson 1992:143-4) As time progressed, the nation shifted their focus to a more long-term set of goals instead of short term turn around, and realized a major change was necessary to implement these plans, including modifying the governance structure. These changes challenged the authority of the Agency over the nation, and the leaders knew it would be a fight.

**Constitutional Revision**

In 1970, the nation took action to reclaim sovereignty and control from the agency, and closely examined their existing constitution, deciding it did not fit with the current focus of the nation. Phillip Martin was re-elected in 1971 and he and supporters within the council took
action to restructure the programs the nation already had in place, as well as developing new programs to further the nation’s long-term goals. A major part of this restructuring included consolidating the roles of Community Action Program with the council, narrowing their focus to one decision making body instead of two independent boards, making it easier to accomplish their desired outcomes and creating a single entity to represent the nation in dealing with the agency and other state or federal entities, and consolidating planning, fiscal, and procurement procedures to streamline the process. (Peterson 1992:144) Because of their direct challenge to Agency authority, the chairman and superintendent held a tense relationship during these early years. The nation eventually circulated a petition calling for the removal of the superintendent and his replacement with someone who would work more closely with the nation, leading to the appointment of Robert Benn as the first Mississippi Choctaw to the office of Superintendent of the Mississippi Choctaw Agency, an action which furthered the goals of the nation in the coming years, and fueled a partnership between Benn and Martin which had been started years before after Benn’s appointment as housing officer.

In their revision of the Mississippi Choctaw constitution, the nation took steps to further consolidate power and to modify the governing structure to one that would fit with their contemporary culture. In the final version, the nation established staggered four-year terms for both the principal chief and council members, ensuring that no one party had more power than the other. The new system moved from the parliamentary style of governance established under the IRA, where council members would be elected and then choose who would serve as part of the three-member executive from within themselves. In the new model, the executive was elected separately from the council by the entire nation, and responsibilities and powers were divided between the branches, instead of it all going through the council. (Mississippi Band
In the first election in 1975, Martin lost a close race to former Choctaw School Principal Calvin Isaac, who effectively paused the fast-paced developments which had marked the nation over the previous decade in an effort to slow the pace of change, but did not dismantle any aspects of the governing structure or other aspects established under Martin’s leadership. As very few changes were made during his term, the nation saw that innovative and forward-thinking leadership was needed to continue the rate of change which they had experienced since the 1960’s. Martin served on the tribal council for two years prior to the next election, when he was elected to the role of Principal Chief and set about continuing the work he and his supporters had accomplished since the start of the “Era of Change” in 1964. (Peterson 1992:147) During this time, the government examined their organization closely and realized that some type of delegation of responsibilities was needed. The entire council could not be expected to become experts in every type of business they were approached with, so they decided to divide into subgroups, each handling a different set of responsibilities such as questions dealing with education, housing, finances, and many other areas of daily existence as a native nation in the United States.

One of the major goals that drove Martin and his supporters was the need for employment opportunity for Choctaw citizens in the area. With limited options, it was necessary to develop some type of economic draw to stop the loss of Choctaw citizens looking elsewhere for opportunity. Following Isaac’s election to Principal Chief, Martin established a consulting firm focusing on Indian governance, assisting in the development of fiscal and personnel administrative structures similar to those he had helped establish for the Mississippi Choctaw, as well as other types of program and economic development with native nations across the Eastern and Southwestern United States. Through is experiences during this time, Martin came to realize
that native nations had to place more emphasis on economic development through private means instead of relying on the federal government for the limited employment opportunities they provided. (Peterson 1992:149,153) During the 1960’s, the nation had attempted to produce jobs in agriculture and forestry, but due to lack of funds and interest among the younger generation, the program had failed. They had also established a construction company to build the houses paid for through housing grants. Initially they only did the finishing work, but eventually began bidding on full contracts, seeing success after the establishment of the Chata Development Company in 1969. Following the success of the development company, the nation sought to draw manufacturing or other industrial businesses to the reservation, but encountered many issues, even after establishing an industrial park in 1971 to make the reservation more desirable for these industries.

Developmental Surge

In 1979, four years after his previous defeat, Phillip Martin was elected chief again on a platform of aggressive economic development and self-determination, setting the stage for the massive development experienced by the nation in the 1980’s and 90’s. That same year, the nation used funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and an Economic Development Administration grant to build a 42,000 square foot plant, establishing Chata Enterprises in the process. The nation attracted the Packard Electric Division of General Motors and set up a business assembling wiring harnesses and components for automobiles, employing 200. Soon after, the American Greeting Corporation toured the reservation again, following an unsuccessful visit in the late 1960’s. Due to the tremendous development and improvements made on social, educational, and economic development fronts, they entered into an agreement with the nation to establish a plant for hand finishing greeting cards. After dealing with several problems financing
the enterprise, the Mississippi Choctaw became the first native nation to construct an industrial building on a reservation using state industrial development bonds, establishing the Choctaw Greeting Enterprise. From here, the economic development on the reservation took off, with the nation expanding their original plant, doubling the size of their operation for Packard, and drawing business from Ford as well. They soon ran out of room in the industrial park in Pearl River, expanding further operations to neighboring towns across the reservation. (Peterson 1992:155-157) In under ten years, the nation went from contracting work from suppliers to manufacturing the components themselves, expanding their operations continually along the way and creating opportunities for hundreds of citizens with each new venture. Today, they are one of the top five private employers in the state of Mississippi, employing 5000 citizens and non-citizens in the area among numerous holdings including a nursing home, hospital, metal fabrication plant, plastic molding plant, laundry services, gaming facilities, and various contracting businesses. (Choctawbusiness.com)

The increase in industrial employment on the reservation led to a demand for technically trained workers to manage the skilled labor positions within the tribal enterprises. Many roles called for training which was not readily available to Choctaw graduates, meaning that a number of jobs within the tribal enterprises went to non-native workers who were brought in for their experience and training to help get the businesses up and running effectively. This is a common practice today, especially within native nations who have built gaming facilities, to contract out management and other skilled labor positions to outsiders who have training within the field, at least until the enterprise can get off the ground and to a relatively stable state where a transition by tribal citizens into the contracted roles is feasible. At the time, this caused some tension within the nation as the enterprises were touted as a major source of employment for citizens
during their development. The realization of the dependence on outside expertise to make their industries work led the leadership of the Mississippi Choctaw to look toward developing educational and training opportunities. While the nation did not seriously consider taking over the school system from the Bureau of Indian Affairs until later on, there were talks of establishing a community college on the reservation in the early 1970’s, with Chris Isaac running on an education forward platform in the Principal Chief elections in 1975. (Isaac 1975) While the main drive during the 1980’s for the Mississippi Choctaw was economic development, by the end of the decade it was clear that the educational issues the nation faced severely limited their prospects.

Unique Challenges

The Mississippi Choctaw encountered many hurdles on their nation building path. One which was relatively unique was the challenges of their rise during the aftermath of the Civil Rights Era in Mississippi. As the nation began asserting sovereign rights and undertaking economic development measures, many Mississippians were wary of any actions by the federal government following the Civil Rights Act and measures taken in the following years, including forced desegregation and minority opportunities. The growing strength and authority of the Choctaw government, especially following their restructuring in the 1970’s, was viewed as personally threatening by many white officials in the region. Competition for construction contracts, the thought of a tribal police with its own jurisdiction, and the concept of tribal sovereignty for the Choctaw government raised irrational fears among many non-Choctaw residents in the area. During the 1970’s, there were even legal challenges to the sovereignty of the nation itself from officials, threatening to undo the decade of work which came before. Luckily, these suits were eventually overturned. (Peterson 1992:157-158) Through cooperation
with local officials and outreach, the Mississippi Choctaw set out to quell these feelings and to strengthen the relationships with officials across the state, emphasizing their tribal sovereignty and government-to-government relations which could be beneficial to both parties. Today they have become a major driver for their region in Mississippi, both economically and socially, employing thousands in various tribal enterprises and drawing others to the area around the reservation which were drawn to the area through their successes.

**Taking Back Control**

Under the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act, native nations across the United States were able to take control of federal programs on the reservation through a process known as “638 contracting.” In the process, Native Nations could enter self-determination contracts with federal agencies to take control of programs, functions, services, or activities which had previously been administered by the agencies. Through this process, the government transfers responsibility and funds in a dollar-for-dollar transfer to the tribe, as well as potential for administrative assistance, training, and facility support during the early phases of the transfer, in what is known as a contract support cost. The end goal of these transfers was to transfer responsibilities and control over programs and program administration to Native Nations and away from the federal government. (Strommer & Osborne 2015) This is often seen as a turning point for many native nations and their process of self-determination and nation building. The Mississippi Choctaw took full advantage of this program as soon as it was authorized, with the help of Benn as Agency Superintendent. In the years prior the act, the nation began taking over smaller programs from the agency little by little, developing the agency and skills to run the programs in a way that would match their own culture and governance structure. Initially the contracts were for programs which the tribe had a similar position already in place. One such
program was for adult education. After contracting the position from the Agency the nation set about establishing a massive program overhaul, focusing efforts on training and competency exams to allow out of school citizens complete high school. Following the success of the adult education program, the nation continued to contract and consolidate smaller programs from the agency, focusing on getting each program up and running successfully before moving on to the next. Due to this pattern, the nation put off taking over major programs like the school system until later when they had developed their capabilities further. (Peterson 1992:145-146) After years of discussion and planning, the school system opened in 1989 for the first time under the nation’s control, marking a more complete consolidation of Agency functions under national control instead of split between the two entities. The nation also established the Tribal Revenue Funds Program to control the application of funding across the reservation, as well as diminishing the reliance of the nation on national funds for social projects. (Adams et al. 2007:230)

When examining the development of the Mississippi Choctaw, it is easier to understand when the system is broken down by periods. In the 1960’s, the nation was focused on self-determination and the development of social programs through the Choctaw Community Action Agency to bring the Choctaw back out of the situation the previous century had placed them in. When the 1970’s came along, the nation began to shift their focus to the governance structure and developing effective institutions to assist in the day-to-day governance of national programs, working toward modifying the limiting IRA constitution and format to fit their contemporary culture and their long-term goals for the nation. During this time, they also began examining possibilities for economic development on the reservation through national enterprises like the Chata Development Corporation, especially under Chief Martin’s aggressive development plan,
leading to a period of rapid growth and development beginning in 1979. In the following decade, the main focus of the nation was on economic development through Chata Enterprise and their holdings, as well as the many other tribal businesses and enterprises across the reservation. (Patterson 1992:159) In the 1990’s and into the new century, the tribe’s focus has been relatively diverse, with educational and infrastructure improvements, economic development, and new opportunities for citizens on the reservation, leading many to return to Mississippi from abroad. The impact of the massive economic development among the Mississippi Choctaw is not only felt in their pocketbook either. The nation has taken profits from programs like the casinos and national enterprises and reinvested them into cultural and language programs, public safety, youth leadership, and many other programs which give back to the community while ensuring their Choctaw heritage is maintained and even enhanced for future generations, creating a place where citizens want to come back to. (Harvard Project 2008:112)

When stepping back from this timeline, the actions of the Mississippi Choctaw take the arc of a revitalization movement. When faced with increased stressors and tension, the nation turned to leaders like Phillip Martin and Robert Benn, who took the training they had received elsewhere as well as on the job learning and applied the concepts to the unique situation the nation was facing. They knew that the standard way of doing things would not work, and that self-determination and tribal sovereignty for the nation hinged on major changes taking place at the local and national levels. Through major changes to the governing structure, the methods used by the nation to deal with issues, and the very concept of modern Choctaw identity in Mississippi, they were able to create a system which worked for them, learning lessons which would be used moving forward through the adaption and implementation stages. The leadership faced tremendous pressures from all sides, the likes of some not known to other native nations
due to their unique situation and location, but were able to make the best of the situation and turn around relations with governments and officials from the community to the national level. To achieve their developmental goals, the nation had to alter their governance structure and change their outlook to a more long-term approach, a tenet which has become synonymous with the nation building model established by the Native Nations Institute and the Harvard Project.

Within the Mississippi Choctaw case, Phillip Martin fulfills the role of Max Weber’s charismatic leader as referenced by Wallace, with some slight modifications. While Martin was a tremendous leader among his nation and held considerable favor and sway over many of the citizens through his long tenure in tribal politics, he was not a religious or cult leader. In Weber’s model, the charismatic leader has a form of communion or a relationship with a supernatural being or entity. In the secular model, this aspect of the definition would not work, but could arguably be supplanted with access to a particular set of knowledge or skills. (Wallace 1956:273)

Martin and Benn brought with them knowledge gained away from the nation, and with it a new perspective on how things should work in a well-functioning system. This outside knowledge serves to supplant the dated and stereotypical concept of divine or inspired knowledge, as history has shown examples of charismatic leaders employing outside knowledge or even “borrowing” from local prophets, as has been argued about the Shawnee prophet Tenskwatawa’s message and vision’s similarity to those of the Delaware prophet Neolin and to the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake. (Jacobs 1995:169-172)

Within his reference to Weber’s concept of the charismatic leader, Wallace explains the concept of routinization of charisma within a stable institutional structure as being a key concept in the longevity of a movement. He explains that the power of the leader must be transferred to other members of the society so that the movement will not die with the death or failure of the
prophet or leader. (Wallace 1956:274) In a similar manner, the knowledge of a leader within a nation undertaking the revitalization movement of nation building must be built into the institutions of governance and clearly transmitted to other leaders to ensure that everyone is on the same page and that advancements made during one tenure does not reset when the next leader takes power. The Mississippi Choctaw constitution achieves this through the staggering of 4-year terms, ensuring executive and legislative continuity between elected councils, a tenet which is often a recommended model for effective governance continuity, as well as within the continuity of the Mississippi Choctaw system in the terms when Martin was not present or in a leadership position.

Another important tenet of Wallace’s model is maze way reformation. This term refers to “the restructuring of elements and subsystems which have already attained currency in the society.” (Wallace 1956:270) While Wallace is primarily focusing on the individual’s consciousness, ontology, and worldview, the model can be applied to nations undertaking native nation building. In many cases, as it was with the Mississippi Choctaw, nations redesign their governance structure, institutions, and many other aspects of their systems to create the new model which will allow them to exert tribal sovereignty and self-determination over their own affairs and create a system which is culturally appropriate to their contemporary culture. These changes not only apply to the systems themselves, but also how the systems relate to one another. In the Mississippi Choctaw case, the contracting and absorption of former Agency and federal programs led to shifts in the way problems were addressed and intergovernmental relations proceeded. In 1975, the Mississippi Choctaw acquired funds to complete the construction of a 58,000 square foot health center and began working to take over Indian Health Services public health functions, becoming one of the first native nations to take full control of
all health services for their nation in 1984. (HPAIED 2002) Today, the nation operates the Choctaw Health Center, a 180,000 square foot, state of the art facility and teaching hospital that provides some of the best medical and dental care in the region, as well as 3 smaller clinics in outlying Choctaw communities. The development of this facility and the relationships with local communities, contractors, and medical programs would not have come about if the nation had not first contracted the operation of the Indian Health Services. Today, the Choctaw Agency consists solely of the Bureau of Roads, as virtually every other function has been taken over by the nation. (BIA 2020) These new patterns altered the functions of the programs themselves among the nation and streamlining the process by creating a unified system meant that the process itself changed for the nation going forward. Through this altering of the traditional pattern as it had existed for decades, the nation effectively changed how they related to the Agency and how they addressed their own issues, affecting their worldview through an increase in agency and accountability.

Wallace’s concept of adaptation of the movement is readily identified in the Mississippi Choctaw case, as with many others across Indian Country. In his fourth step, he notes that resistance will almost always be encountered when instituting changes, especially when it comes to maze way reformation and ideologies. Within this step, the group deals with these challenges by tweaking their system to better fit the society and to deal with potential kickbacks from those who do not agree with the new system. This concept was expressed during the legal challenges levied against the nation during their early development and extension and expression of tribal sovereignty over reservation affairs. The nation encountered many forms of resistance, both from within and without, and in a variety of applications. Even within the formation of the new governance structures, many native nations willingly go through the adaption process to ensure
that the structure fits the contemporary culture of the nation at that time. Within the Mississippi Choctaw example, this adaptation is evident in the modifications made to the terms of the legislative and executive branches prior to approval of the constitution, as well as in the delay in contracting the school system from the Bureau of Indian Affairs following negative opinions of the action during a community needs assessment referendum. (Peterson 1992:159)

Nation building for the Mississippi Choctaw has been a long and arduous trek, beginning with late recognition in 1945 following generations of poverty and genocidal practices at the hands of the United States, as well as constant removal pressure from the state of Mississippi and the federal government. However, through grit and impressive economic development, they have become a driving force in the state of Mississippi, as well as a major influence on modern best practices models for native nation building across the globe.
Chapter 4: From Trailer to Titan: The Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Another major success story in Native nation building is that of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. In recent times, the nation has completely redesigned their governance structure and worked to encourage extensive economic development, through both tribal enterprise and encouragement and assistance for the private sector and entrepreneurial citizens. This process has built the nation into a major economic driver in Central Oklahoma, but just over a generation ago, this was not the case.

The Citizen Potawatomi Nation in the contact and colonial period were located in the Middle Ground region of the old Northwest, primarily around the bottom of Lake Michigan in what is now Illinois, Michigan, and Indiana. In 1821, the first Treaty of Chicago saw them and several other Anishinaabe groups cede virtually all lands in Michigan territory south of the Grand River, as well as an easement between Detroit and Chicago along the southern shore of Lake Michigan through Illinois and Indiana territory. (Buckingham 1842: 257-260) Between 1832 and 1837, the Potawatomi were party to numerous treaties, including the Second Treaty of Chicago, enacted under the Indian Removal Act of 1830. These led to a forced removal march from their former territory in northern Indiana to Osawatomie, Kansas in late fall of 1838. The trail became known as the Potawatomi Trail of Death due to the deaths along the way and resulting from the harsh winter that followed when they got to Kansas. (Trail of Death 2017) In 1867, after living with the Prairie Potawatomi and seeing increased pressure due to efforts to open up lands for settlement and as part of a larger movement to consolidate Indian Territory to the newly available territory within the Oklahoma boundary following the various treaties of 1866, the band sold their reservation to purchase one in central Oklahoma, near present day
Shawnee, Oklahoma. To enforce their ownership over the new territory, the band chose to take United States citizenship, and henceforth were known as the Citizen Potawatomi Band. (Barrett 2009)

Like many others in Indian Territory, the Citizen Band was hit hard by the combination of the General Allotment Act, the Springer Amendment, the Cherokee Commission, and the Oklahoma Organic Act leading into the early 20th century. This combination saw excess lands sold off for settlement, with increased pressure following the land rush into the Unassigned Lands west of the nation in 1889 and the Oklahoma Organic Act in 1890, which divided the territory in half along the Citizen Potawatomi border. (Mostellar 2013: 134-140) As a result, the nation saw a major reduction in territory. In the 1920’s and 30’s, increased farming pressure and a severe drought in the region stretching from Kansas to the Texas Panhandle led to a devastating series of dust storms affecting the prairie regions of the United States and Canada. Oklahoma was at the epicenter of the effects, and native nations who had been forced into western farming and ranching methods in the previous generation as a result of the Dawes and Curtis Acts were devastated. The Citizen Potawatomi saw large numbers of their population fleeing Oklahoma during this period looking for opportunity along with millions of other “Okies.” Emigration continued as a result of numerous oil booms in the early 1900’s, with skilled oilfield workers following the money as the boom in Central and Eastern Oklahoma levelled out and other states spiked. (Barrett 2012) The Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936 extended the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act over the state, allowing tribes to rebuild limited tribal governing structures which had been dissolved at the time of statehood. Unfortunately, these were limited to boilerplate business management structures which were subject to approval and scrutiny of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior. Like many other nations, the Citizen
Potawatomi accepted the provisions and in 1938 established a constitution which was hobbled not only by the foreign governance style, but also by federal approval clauses in the language of the law. The general council model proved insufficient and ineffective over the next fifty years. Relying on a quorum of only 50 citizens, families could take over decisions, or reverse those of an opposing view, by bringing together 26 people for a majority. General elections required in-person voting, disenfranchising those who did not live near Shawnee, including two thirds of the tribal citizenship who lived outside of Oklahoma. General council meetings became acrimonious so often that it became difficult to achieve a quorum, and according to Chairman John “Rocky” Barrett, individuals often had to leave to round up family members to create a quorum, and then “guard the door” to get anything accomplished in the meeting. (Barrett 2014)

A Broken System

This system did not fit the hereditary style of governance the Citizen Potawatomi had prior to 1907, and ultimately led to more conflict than progress. By 1971, the tribe had only $550, 2.5 acres in trust and a little over 60 acres in fee status, and the headquarters were an abandoned construction trailer owned by the BIA and left on an abandoned property. There was no rule of law, and the Chairman was even arrested for using the tribal checkbook to buy his personal groceries. (Barrett 2012) As seen with the Mississippi Choctaw and Cherokee, a young, educated leader stepped in and began movement toward addressing the issues facing the Citizen Potawatomi. John “Rocky” Barrett was appointed to serve the remainder of his uncle’s term as Vice Chairman in 1971 following the removal of the former Chairman and his subsequent promotion. Barrett took an opposing view to those of his uncle, who saw the agency Superintendent as a necessary figurehead for a meeting to be formal. He describes his parents and uncle as “BIA kids,” who did not see the viability or sovereignty of tribal decisions without
the ear of the Superintendent, a view that developed and entrenched itself often within older
generations of Native nations with IRA governance systems and constitutions. (Barrett 2009)
This ideology reflects what Cornell and Kalt label the “Standard Approach” to indigenous
governance, where someone outside the tribe sets the agenda. (Cornell & Kalt 2007:7-17) The
governance structure of the Citizen Potawatomi in the early 1970’s was entrenched in the
colonial business model structure which dated back to the original approved constitution in 1938,
with very little change or adaptation over time to fit their new circumstances. Barrett saw the
effects of this model first-hand from a young age, as his family had been heavily involved in
multiple levels of tribal administration for generations prior to his appointment and then election
as Vice Chairman. He saw the inroads made by the BIA and Superintendents, undercutting tribal
endeavors and hobbling efforts to expand or change the status quo in Potawatomi County.
Following the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 108 in 1953, the Citizen Potawatomi
faced the threat of termination, and were on the block, only escaping due to an active set of cases
in front of the Indian Claims Commission. (Barrett 2012: ICC 1951; Docket 111, 217) The BIA
Direct Employment program and urban relocation efforts during that same period saw fewer
young people staying on the territory, exacerbating the spread of citizens across the United States
and away from tribal headquarters, leading to increased difficulty in the operation of the General
Council under the quorum model.

Following his two terms as Vice Chairman, Barrett was elected to a position on the Inter-
Tribal Group for Oklahoma, which acted as a corporation between tribes in Oklahoma to serve as
an avenue for federal funding to tribal groups instead of being directly granted directly to the
tribes. After serving on the committee for several years he left to go back to work in the oilfields,
before returning to the Citizen Potawatomi government as tribal administrator in 1982, serving
there until running for tribal chairman in 1985. As a result of his time on the Inter-Tribal Group, he held a different perspective on tribal affairs and the role of the BIA in tribal decisions. After hearing a speech on tribal sovereignty by F. Browning Pipestem and attorney William Rice, Barrett’s ideas of what a tribe could do shifted dramatically. He looked around and realized that the Citizen Potawatomi government was not functioning as a government at all, but as an ineffective business board. (Barrett 2012) In order to improve the nation’s situation, they had to make major changes at all levels of their structure.

**Determining Citizenship**

One of the major challenges facing the Citizen Potawatomi was the question of citizenship. In 1969, the Citizen Potawatomi took further steps toward securing the settlement from their 1948 case under the Indian Claims Commission. It is important to note that the Indian Claims Commission was a part of the three-pronged termination policy used by the United States between 1946 and 1970 to actively work toward de-recognizing federally recognized native nations to nullify treaty obligations and to deal with the often referenced “Indian Problem.” Under the Indian Claims Commission, tribes had 5 years to bring forward any claims against the United States, ranging from failure to uphold the fiduciary trust responsibility established under *Cherokee Nation v Georgia*, dispossession of territory, failure to uphold treaty obligations, and beyond. The catch was that if a settlement was reached, the tribe abdicated any right to raise the claim again in the future. In some cases, tribes were coerced or threatened with losing their claims against the government if they did not accept termination, as was the case with the Menominee’s $8.5 million award from their 1934 forestry mismanagement case. (Loew 2001:31-34) In accepting their claim, the Citizen Potawatomi created a tribal roll based on the Bureau of Indian Affairs requirement that all members had to have a minimum of 1/8th Citizen Potawatomi
blood in 1969. (Barrett 2012) This determination of blood percentage was based off a roll from 1861 which was created by a non-native recorder in Sugar Creek, Kansas. He was observed recording individuals’ blood quantum based on their appearance, and even blood kin were assigned different numbers if one had a darker complexion at the time. The concept of blood quantum is not a traditional concept within indigenous society, and it’s first use in the Americas dates to the Spanish caste system which developed during the early encomienda system in the 1500’s. Blood quantum is a colonial structure, and was intentionally used by the United States as a termination policy, in hopes that native nations would eventually diminish their blood percentage to the point that treaty obligations could be put aside, splitting percentages over and over until they mathematically reduced themselves out of existence through intermarriage. As a result of the blood quantum requirements and the new population list based on a roll closure after June of 1961, the Citizen Potawatomi had approximately 11,000 enrolled citizens in 1971 and were dealing with thousands of enrollment appeals as a result of the inaccuracies on the 1861 rolls. (Barrett 2012: Hownikan 1971)

The turmoil and fallout surrounding the 1969 roll meant that the early 1970’s saw a tremendous amount of stress within the community. When Barrett returned as tribal administrator and later Chairman in the 1980’s, he knew that the concept of citizenship was a political, legal, and ultimately cultural question instead of a racial one. Individuals who were deemed citizens of a nation were recognized as a political component of that nation. The hidden agenda of blood quantum requirements was the eventual termination of identity. In 1989, the nation changed their citizenship requirements to move away from blood quantum to one of lineal descent from an ancestor on the 1937 roll. (CPN Constitution Art 3; Sec 9) By determining their own requirements for citizenship, the nation was able to exert their sovereignty and bring back
thousands of individuals who would not have qualified for citizenship under the former blood quantum restrictions. Today, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation has over 30,000 enrolled citizens across the United States, up from 11,000 in 1971. This number is a direct result of the changes made to the citizenship criteria within the constitution and represents a change toward the traditional classification of kinship and voluntary identification, as citizens are free to drop their citizenship if they so desire at any time.

1985 Constitution & the Absentee Ballot System

Another component of citizenship which had previously been a major issue among the nation was the concept of voting. Under the old constitution, the nation utilized the general council and quorum form of governance and voting as established under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act. This style of governance led to a lot of trouble, as it was possible to call a special general council meeting to reverse measures immediately after they were passed if you had a majority of individuals who would vote your way, meaning as few as 26 individuals could make decisions affecting all 11,000 citizens. Barrett describes these meetings as devolving into 7-hour shouting matches or “bad family reunions” on multiple occasions, and ultimately did not come close to the concept of an effective institution. In the 1985 constitution, the Citizen Potawatomi redefined the voting process for their nation to re-enfranchise those who did not live within the state of Oklahoma. They decided that the general council would remain but would only consist of those over the age of 18 and

![Figure 2: Citizen Potawatomi Legislative Districts. (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)](image-url)
could only decide what would be voted on, setting the topic for referendum. The matter would then be put to the voters, which included any citizen who had registered to vote, meaning that citizens from Alaska to Florida could now vote on topics affecting their nation instead of sitting back and watching from afar. (Barrett 2012) This absentee ballot system was a major step in reconnecting the nation to its citizens abroad and was a key part of the proposed constitutional reform leading to the approval of the constitution reforms of 1983. However, as with many efforts to modify IRA era constitutions across Indian Country, the reform met opposition from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, postponing approval of the reforms until 1985. (Barrett 2009) In changing the citizenship criteria and allowing all citizens to vote on referendum topics and elections, the Citizen Potawatomi saw a major shift in the mechanisms that drove their governance system. In response, Barrett issued an executive order calling for council meetings to be held in any major metropolitan area with over 2000 citizens, beginning a series of travelling meetings wherever citizens were centered around, from Houston to Seattle to Washington D.C. This worked for a while, but as technology advanced, it was evident that there needed to be a modified system put in place, allowing business to be conducted from the council chambers in Shawnee instead of on the road.

**Voting District Expansion & Digital Legislature**

In 2007, the Citizen Potawatomi nation established a revolutionary system which would become the example for inclusiveness in Indian country. Under the 2007 constitution, the nation expanded their voting districts to include all of the United States, establishing eight districts across the United States based on population density and established a system with regional governance compounds in major population centers like Phoenix, New York City, and Sacramento. A major part of this expansion was the modification of the council to represent their
far-reaching citizenry. Under the 2007 revision, the legislature was created as its own branch of
government consisting of sixteen representatives, with eight members coming from Oklahoma
and one representative coming from each external district. Additionally, three of the Oklahoma
seats would be occupied by the executive branch and therefore elected by the entire citizenship
as part of the national elections. This was meant to provide a further step in equalizing
representation of the two-thirds of the citizens who lived outside Oklahoma, while keeping
Potawatomi County and Oklahoma as the focus, as all the nation’s major holdings were there. To
facilitate this radical departure from the former in-person general council, the nation developed
what is often referenced as a “digital legislature.” At each regional office there is a secure
teleconferencing system which links back to the main chambers in Oklahoma. When legislature
meetings are being held, each representative is linked in through the system onto a large screen
and their microphone is controlled by the chairman, who can digitally “call” on members
through the system. The system also provides a level of governance transparency, as anyone,
citizen or non, can view the meetings through the nation’s website or access them after they have
completed through the nation’s extensive video archives of the meetings. The revolutionary
system has become an example to Indian country and has served the nation well since its
inception. In addition to its legislative use, the system has also served in the nation’s effort to
revitalize traditional cultural practices by allowing communities all over the United States to
connect and share lessons, allowing elders or wisdom keepers to teach from a distance and for
wisdom transmission to continue even if a person is not in Shawnee, Oklahoma. (Barrett 2014,
Harvard Project 2011:2)
Governance vs Administration

The 2007 constitution also drastically overhauled the nation’s governance system, expanding on modifications from the 1985. The reforms in the 1985 constitution took steps to alter the functions of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s governance system, moving away from the boilerplate 1938 OkIWA system to one more closely aligned with the needs of the nation. In it, they established separation of powers, granting the chairman abilities to run the day-to-day operations of the nation. They also gave the business committee the responsibility of managing tribal funds and the budget process, as well as the directive of creating the tribal court system. This system maintained the 5-member business board but took steps to separate the powers between the chairman and the board. Unfortunately, there were issues with these separations of power, leading to lawsuits between the council and the chairman, modifications and “tweaks” to the system as it grew, and subsequent amendments to the constitution in 1989 and 1996. In the 2007 reform, the nation abandoned the former business committee for a 3-branch system comprised of the executive, legislature, and judicial branches. Under the new system, each branch is well defined in their roles, dividing responsibilities and delegating within themselves based on abilities. In the legislature, topical committees focus on areas like education, tribal culture and arts, economic development and commerce, and natural resources. (Legislative Committees 2017) This is in direct contrast to the former business committee under the IRA constitution, where everything affecting the nation went through the same five-member committee. In addition to the new branched system, the constitution also removed the authority of the Bureau of Indian Affairs over tribal decisions. Under the former IRA boilerplate constitution and system, major changes like constitutional amendments had to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior, with the Bureau of Indian Affairs often serving as a go-between. By
removing this clause, the nation can utilize their sovereignty without asking permission or long
battles to gain approval like they faced with the 1985 revision over absentee voting. Another
major change came with the move to four-year, staggered terms of office. This motion meant
that there was no longer a major upheaval every two years, as had occurred frequently under the
previous system, and governance continuity became possible as various members of the
legislature took or left office. (Barrett 2012)

The Court System

Another major change was the implementation of the court system. As evidenced from
the removal of the former chairman when Barrett was appointed Vice Chairman, the concept of
rule of law was a foreign concept in the 1970’s for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. According to
Barrett, they did not understand they could pass or enforce laws outside what was in the 1938
constitution at the time. They did not have a court system and considered anything decided in
council as a resolution instead of tribal law. Since the 2007 constitution, the judiciary is
independently elected and serves to enforce the rule of law over everyone, including the
chairman. It serves as a cornerstone to the nation, and its jurisdiction has even been accepted by
local communities. As Barrett puts it, “A government without law and the willingness to enforce
that law isn't really a government. That’s the ultimate act of sovereignty, not only enforcing the
law, but be willing as a people to put themselves under the rule of law is the ultimate act of
sovereignty.” (Barrett 2009) Within the Citizen Potawatomi system, the courts can rule on
constitutionality in dispute between legislative and executive without a cause of action, allowing
them to restrict the action before something bad happens and enforcing absolute rule of law on
all levels of citizens. (Barrett 2014) Through the organization of their judicial and economic
development institutions and the revitalization of their governance system, the nation has been
able to assume the responsibilities of sovereignty, establish a uniform commercial code for businesses dealing with or owned by the nation and its citizens, developed a full faith and credit agreement with the states in which they do business, and acknowledge that contractual obligations are enforceable under their own law, holding themselves accountable in cases of missteps or violations. (Barrett 2009)

### Economic Development

Along with governance development and revitalization, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation has also been at the center of one of the most successful economic development stories in Oklahoma. The nation has gone from housing their tribal government office in an abandoned trailer with only $550 and less than 100 acres of tribal land, aside from individual allotments, to one of the main economic and political drivers in central Oklahoma, with a job available for any citizen who wants one and employing many non-citizens in the area. The nation accomplished this through what Barrett calls leveraging resources. When one venture was doing well, they would use the profits to leverage the next business or development, starting with simply selling cigarettes across a tribal museum counter and eventually building up to a $300 million casino, a $50 million grocery business, and operating the largest tribally owned bank in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Constitutional Revisions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Absentee Voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committee controls budget and tribal funds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairman given control of day-to-day functions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directive to create tribal courts</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Citizenship changed from blood quantum to direct descent from 1937 rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Amendment A: Name change to “Citizen Potawatomi Nation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Voting/Representative districts expanded to entirety of the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legislature expanded to 16 members, 8 from Oklahoma, 8 at from other districts, Distance governance/meetings established at population centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checks and Balances installed between 3 branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clearly defined roles and sub-committees within branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-year, staggered terms of office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independently elected judiciary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3
Timeline of Major Constitutional Amendments and Revisions for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation between 1985 and 2007
The nation began the process of buying a failing bank in during the economic downturn in 1989 and, by taking their own money out of trust with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, increased their interest by four percent. By investing in the bank, the nation now controlled how their money was invested and loaned, eliminating oversight by the BIA and furthering sovereignty through independent financing and control of programs. One of the keys to their success is the focus on transparency and accountability. As Barrett has stated before, the long-term focus of the nation must be on eventual economic independence. To ensure that, everything must be on the level, and by providing transparency the nation can move from the former situation of a leader paying for his own groceries out of tribal funds to one where every cent is accounted for and used toward the most good as well as being insulated from the influence of individual interests. (Barrett 2009, 2012)

In 2003 the nation expanded their financial institution ventures into and created the Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation. The CPCDC is a certified Community Development Financial Institution which focuses on commercial and consumer lending to Potawatomi citizens nationwide and to Native Americans across Oklahoma. Through numerous tribal, federal, and private revenue streams, the CPCDC offers lending to tribal entrepreneurs who might not be able to access the same investment elsewhere. The corporation also provides business development assistance, with the end goal of ridding the debtor of the need for the corporation and making them “bankable,” preferably with an eye to the nation’s own First National Bank and Trust Company for their banking needs. (Coker-Bias 2007) The CPCDC offers financial education courses for citizens and employees of the nation, as well as a matched savings program to assist in capital development. The corporation also offers credit builder loans to assist citizens in rebuilding their credit score, a program tailored specifically to loans for the
construction of tornado shelters, and jumpstart auto loans to ensure employees have reliable transportation to get to work. (CPCDC.org 2018) This award-winning model has seen massive movements toward development of private Citizen Potawatomi businesses separate from tribally owned and managed enterprises, leading to economic development in all the nation’s electoral districts across the United States. This type of citizen capital investment and asset building not only helps the nation financially, but it also strengthens the infrastructure and abilities within the nation itself, leading to stronger sovereignty and the situation that is reflected in Shawnee, Oklahoma today, where the majority of the businesses in the town are owned by either the nation itself or a citizen of the nation. (Kalt 2007)

Today, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation is literally one of the example cases for modern nation building as defined by Cornell and Kalt. The modern nation has developed into a powerhouse in Oklahoma and across the United States by continually leveraging their own assets to continue their growth, building from a nation with $550 in the bank to one with over $500 million in assets alone, and literally owning the bank, building from a $14 million investment to a $250 million profit from that one enterprise alone. As with the Cherokee and the Mississippi Choctaw nations, their process of nation building follows the same arc of a revitalization movement. By the mid-1970s the nation was nearly broke and had almost no control over their own territory, with a governing structure that could overturn ideas with only 26 people voting. By 1982, the nation started taking a hard look at how they governed and began a process of revitalization and economic development which completely overhauled their governmental form and governance process. Constitutional reform was a cornerstone to the process, and saw massive changes implemented to the governance structure, moving from an IRA-style business model, to one of separated powers and eventually a 3-branch system with checks and balances
and clearly defined roles within the nation’s governance. Through the leadership of Chairman Barrett the nation modified their collective mazeway and views on how governance should work and what the nation should do to keep up with the world around them, implementing measures to strengthen and exert their own tribal sovereignty and spurring economic development to make them a player in the state of Oklahoma, shifting from a nation considered a write-off to a major influencer on Indian policy and international relations for the state.

As discussed with Phillip Martin for the Mississippi Choctaw, John “Rocky” Barrett fills Wallace’s modified version of Weber’s charismatic leader for the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Drawing from observation and experience during his time serving on the Inter-Tribal Group of Oklahoma and his previous experience as Vice-Chairman, Barrett went through an ideological conversion, modifying his own mazeway and conception of how he saw governance working for the nation. He then communicated his own modifications to the rest of the nation, leading to physical modifications in the constitutional revisions in 1985, 1989, 1996, and 2007. He brought a new ideology to his roles of leadership during his time in the old system of governance in the 1970’s, and rightfully spurred discussions of how the nation should govern itself and how the new system should be designed, drawing on ideas gained through both personal experience and research. The new ideas and structures proposed for the nation were continually developed and tweaked between the ratification of the 1985 constitution and the introduction of absentee voting, through the passage of the current constitution in 2007, ultimately leading to the adoption of similar tenets as those of the Mississippi Choctaw. This major shift represents mazeway reformation, as the old system had to be put aside for the new one to succeed, down to even the method of voting in the old IRA business committee form of governance. (Barrett 2009)
Through a tremendous amount of work and redesign, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation has emerged as a titan in Oklahoma and is one of the primary examples used in the native nation building world to show a successful path toward of making change. By revitalizing their governance system and modifying their very concept of governance, the nation has pulled together from a what Barrett referred to as a “bad family reunion” to a cutting edge and effective economic and political powerhouse.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

Applying the Model

Wallace defines a revitalization movement as “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct more satisfying culture.” Within the model the changes to the society occur within a relatively short timeline, in comparison to the generally slow cultural change or acculturation and are done so with agency and intent. (Wallace 1956:265) In examining native nation building under this focal lens, the process easily falls within this definition. However, when other aspects of the model are applied, things start to narrow and fit less easily. Although Wallace states in his work that this theory would apply to secular and non-secular movements, the general application since its publication has been to movements and figures that have focused on the revision of religious or spiritual worldviews as a primary directive, with broader cultural changes coming as a result of the initial shift. As such, when applying Wallace’s model to native nation building in a traditional sense, there are modifications to be made. Some of the particularly challenging aspects lie within the classification between secular and non-secular movements, the concept of the charismatic leader versus the concept of the nation-builder, and the fitment between the process of native nation building and the “stages” of revitalization movements as defined by Wallace.

One of the easier fitments comes within the application of the mazeway concept, as mazeway reformation is required for both revitalization and for native nation building. Within the native nation building model, mazeway reformation is a key component in the intentional transfer or change between the “standard approach” and the “nation building approach” by nations looking to revitalize their nation’s governance systems, practices, and institutions. (Cornell & Kalt 2007:3-33) Adherents focus on changing the way the process is thought about
by changing the components within the mazeway. Instead of looking at government and the leadership as a distributor, leaders are instead seen as nation builders and mobilizers. The nation becomes the one to set the agenda instead of following one that is handed to them. They develop culturally sensitive and matched institutions instead of using boiler plate models which were applied and blindly followed. By making these and several other discreet changes in the way the nation looks at its own system, native nations taking on the process of nation building are engaging in active mazeway reformation.

Mazeway Reformation

The effort to work a change in a mazeway and the change in the real system together to permit more effective stress reduction is the effort toward revitalization. The collaboration of a number of individuals in this type of effort is the revitalization movement. (Wallace 1956:267) In working toward these mazeway shifts seen in native nation building, as well as pushing toward adoption and implementation at the national, and often subsequently international level, native nations are undertaking revitalization efforts and collectively revitalization movements. The individual must alter their personal Gestalt in reformulating their mazeway, altering how they relate to society, their culture, nature, body, and even means of action. (Wallace 1956:267) Wallace’s theory is based around an organismic analogy. Using this analogy and seeing the individual as a part of the larger societal organism, he reflected on the necessity of the individual to maintain a mental image of the system and how the parts worked together. In this manner, a stressor on one part of the system affected all other parts of the system. In a similar manner, an ineffective governance system, institution, or program within a nation can lead to wide ranging issues in aspects both directly and indirectly related to that particular “part” of the holistic “organism.” (Wallace 1956:265-266) In like manner, changing aspects of native nations during
the nation building process does not affect only one part or another of the entirety of the nation, but causes shifts within the whole, rippling out and affecting other aspects of the culture in ways that may be obvious or less so to the individual or observer. If we imagine a lodge, with the poles lashed at the top representing aspects of the nation’s culture, the interconnection between these components of the nation means that a shift on pole A will affect B,C,D, and so on. In nation building, the nation sets about readjusting the poles supporting the lodge. If one has damage, it is repaired or replaced. If it has shifted away from the original layout, it is brought back or anchored in a new area. Some may be removed entirely, or new ones added for strength, but the impact is the same, altering the structure as a whole and not just the individual component.

When a nation changes their governance model or governing structure, this change has effects on all other parts of society. Moving from a hereditary leadership or flat governance model to an executive and board, business management-type structure, as was forced on many during the IRA period, has a dramatic effect on the concepts of leadership, responsibility, and even the relationship between the nation and its leaders. In the Tsalagi Ayeli example, moving from town-based split governance models to a full-time national leadership council, judiciary, and executive took massive changes in the way people looked at their own culture and mazeway. No longer did separate councils operate depending on the status of the town, at war or at peace. Every major decision went to the national council, regional judges took ownership over legal matters and disputes, and even the way things were communicated to the nation was changed following the invention and adoption of the syllabary and the founding of the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper. Old traditions were outlawed or put aside in efforts to update the system. Even the concept of caring for children, orphans, and mentally challenged changed from a clan-based system to a national level solution with the creation of national social welfare programs like the
The process of native nation building is inherently a process of mazeway reformation, and the way it is often carried out, starting with leaders who change how they think about governance and the society, working toward a way to deal with external stressors and communicating this idea to the rest of the nation, and so on, matches with the stages or process of a revitalization movement as defined by Wallace.

**Charismatic Leadership**

One of the tougher questions comes in the question of nation builders and the concept of the charismatic leader. While many leaders in native nations across the United States are charismatic and effective leaders, they do not necessarily fit Weber’s definition, as referenced by Wallace. In Weber’s model, the charismatic leader has a form of communion or relationship with a supernatural being or entity. In the secular model, this aspect of the definition would not work, but could arguably be supplanted with access to a particular set of knowledge or skills. (Wallace 1956:273) In defining native nation building as a semi-secular representation of this model, the supernatural connection of the leader to a supernatural or “higher power” should potentially be supplanted with access to “higher knowledge,” bringing insight or information to the nation that was not previously known.

In Roger Griffin’s application of Wallace’s model to Fascism and the Modernism movement, he references the concept of the “propheta,” alluding to Wallace’s use of Weber’s charismatic leader figure. Griffin steps away from the traditional definition of a religious ideology or belief system, instead focusing on the political, social, and economic mazeway, terming this a “political religion” with a focus on a national palingenesis and reconstruction of the nomos. (Griffin 2008:18) While native nation building does not align with the concept of palingenesis, or Griffin’s concept of palingenetic ultranationalism as applied to fascism, the
nativistic aspect does carry weight in the discussion of nation building. (see Griffin 1991) Under Cornell and Kalt’s description of the Nation Building Approach, the concept of a current cultural match transcends this view of “the good old days” mentality. Two hundred years ago, nations did not need an I.T. guy, a GIS department, social media managers, wildlife departments, or publicists, at least in the modern interpretation of these roles. As cultures change the governance systems, institutions, and policies need to adapt, but that does not mean they must completely abandon the previous structure or society. The nomos and mazeway cannot be modified or recreated ex nihilo, as there would be no reference point to work from. This is seen in the many examples of native nation building in the United States, even as far back as the Early Republic, as is seen with the Tsalagi Ayeli. In modifying the governance structure, the nation was not working within a vacuum. The modifications occurred in reference and opposition to the stressors, intended to manage them in a more beneficial and satisfactory way compared to where the nation was prior to the change.

In Wallace’s model, the leadership of this change comes from a charismatic leader or prophet. This individual or group of individuals possessed inspired knowledge or guidance, generally believed to be endowed by some higher knowledge, natural, or supernatural entity. When they received this knowledge, and typically after modifying their individual mazeway, they then set about communicating it to other members of the society in an attempt to modify the collective mazeway and equip the society to deal with stressors more effectively. This prophetic and evangelical aspect is one of the main reasons revitalization movements are often classified as religious in nature. From a western perspective, this type of leadership fits into the Judeo-Christian and Muslim concept of a prophet. Indeed, many like Tenskwatawa and Handsome Lake did serve in the role of a religious leader and what could be considered a prophet. However,
it is important to examine the roles of these leaders in a different light, especially when we look at the effects these movements had on their individual societies. Within many indigenous societies, the concept of religion, at least in the western philosophy of the term, did not exist or was at best very fluid. Spirituality and belief permeated the mazeway and daily interactions with the world around them instead of being compartmentalized to one sector of culture. Indigenous worldviews in a very general sense take the shape of interaction with and as a part of the system around them, in opposition to the Western top-down model, which strives to maintain a separation of humans from nature. As a result, the divisions between spirituality, governance, law, and social norms tend to be more porous than in western societies. Individuals who were “religious leaders” within indigenous society often had far reaching influence compared to the divisions seen within western societies of the same eras. For instance, the American idea of Tȟatȟáŋka Íyotake, or Bull Who Sits Down to Watch the Herd (Sitting Bull), is often focused on him as a “chief”, when he was considered a wičháša wakȟáŋ to the Hunkpapa. This term is commonly translated as a holy man, and in many non-indigenous literatures a “priest.”. While Sitting Bull was a ceremonial leader for his tiospaye, he was not considered to be an executive in the western sense of leadership, as the Lakota did not have such a position at that time. The flat governance structure did not have a single leadership position, but representation from each tiospaye participated in councils to make larger decisions for the nation. The distinction of “chief of the Lakotas” is one that was placed on him from American ideology and government, as well as partly through Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, not internally from the Hunkpapa. (Yenne 2009) The idea of dividing belief and governance, as well as a forced separation of “church” and state within indigenous societies is to an extent an expression of colonialism. Indigenous nations are not the United States, and vice versa, as was established by the Marshall Trilogy and repeatedly
cited since. While there is evidence that best practices models like the nation building method outlined by Cornell and Kalt are successful and applicable across the board, it still does not give researchers or governments a carte blanche to say, “this is how you should do this”, as was done until the 1970’s and beyond by the U.S., Canadian, and Australian governments.

When we look at the concept of a charismatic leader, the notion of an individual who is religiously motivated is a dated and often stereotypical concept. Wallace states that no revitalization movement can be truly non-secular, but can be decidedly less-religious than others, citing Communism and the Herbertist faction during the French Revolution as atheistic examples. (Wallace 1956:277) It is clear that native nation building is particularly semi-secular when examining the unique aspects of indigenous culture that have to be taken into account during the process, with considerations going to cultural match and alignment with societal beliefs. Wallace states that movements within the earlier stages tend to become more political in nature, with some moving firmly into the political realm. In examining the secular side of revitalization movements, Wallace states that “while all secular prophets have not had personality transformation some probably have, and others have had a similar experience in ideological conversion.” (Wallace 1956:277)

This ideological conversion could be aligned with education and development of personal experiences which alter the individual’s mazeway. In a secular or semi-secular movement, the leader might experience a moment of insight instead of supernatural visitation or vision. (Wallace 1956:271) Wallace references the case of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, however, the insight does not have to cause physical affects as did Wesley’s Aldersgate experience. In Wesley’s case, his experience in the Aldersgate service influenced his personal
philosophy on the role of the Christian in their own salvation and the contradictory concept of predestination. (Dreyer 1999:27) This insight does not necessarily have to be an instantaneous “a-ha” or “lightbulb” moment in the traditional cartoon sense of things. It can come as the culmination of personal ruminations on the subject, or when the idea “clicks” to the leader. In several religious revitalization movements among native nations in North America during the colonial and Early Republic period, the leaders experienced a series of visions over time, developing and building on their doctrine as they went along. Wallace references the development of the leader or prophet’s individual mazeway before sharing with others, moving to a proselytizing or evangelical phase where the insight is communicated to the group. (Wallace 1956:270-273) This is generally the kind of revelation we see with native nation building leaders. It is the culmination of gathering new knowledge, applying personal experiences and insights, and observation of “what works and what doesn’t” that alters the individual mazeway of one or several leaders, who then modify their own ideological outlook toward what steps should be taken to gain relief from the outside stressors affecting their nation. In this manner, leaders like Phillip Martin, John “Rocky” Barrett, and John Ross fulfill the role of charismatic leadership for nation building within their own and other native nations, thanks to outreach and educational programs.

Secondarily, the concept of “a” leader in these situations raises some questions. As stated, the leadership does not have to come from a singular leader but can come from a number of individuals working to modify the mazeway. This leadership serves as a direction or spark to modify the mazeway to better address the stress being exerted on the nation. This is not always an individual in an executive position but can come from a grassroots or “bottom-up” approach, albeit these movements themselves have a group of leaders driving them. This is evident in
different examples from Indian Country, with the reformation of the Apsaalooke Crow Nation’s governance as a prime example.

In 1999, the nation was in an election year. A group of young men came together and began talking about how to reform the governance system and sought support from chairman candidates but found none. The movement had tremendous support from the citizens as the nation had not had a single chairman who had not faced indictment or removal since 1967, often resorting to vote buying and nepotism to get elected. The factionalism got so bad that leaders could not talk about change for fear of being pushed out of a faction and losing their jobs in the next upheaval. In the prior system, the nation’s council relied on a quorum system, where a group could get together and call issues to a vote with only 100 citizens, so if something was wanted, they could get family, friends, or other groups together and hijack a meeting, similar to what the Citizen Potawatomi had prior to their reforms. This often resulted in extreme politics and arguments in governance meetings, leading many citizens to avoid participation and the drama involved. This resulted in many issues, including a reputation of inconsistency and unreliability for outside investors or companies looking to do business with the nation, as decisions could be reversed quickly depending on who could gather a quorum. The nation had tried to slightly modify their constitution in the 1980’s, but the factionalism shut that motion down, so the new movement had to work behind the scenes to get things done. They began going to meetings that were not called with the intent of constitutional reform, but for a land dispute. Through the cooperation of the elders in charge of the meetings, they began having smaller discussions on constitutional reform, effectively hiding the conversation in the middle of another meeting, but getting the word out for support without directly risking physical harm to themselves or supporters as had been done in the past. After drumming up support, the group
threw their weight behind a council member who shared their sensibilities and pulled a fast one in the council meeting to get the constitutional change on the docket secretly. In the council meetings, the chairman could decide whether to do a voice vote or a hand vote for issues, so they chose to do a voice vote. After going through several smaller issues to get the crowd off balance and debating, distracting their attention away, the chairman quickly introduced the constitutional reform without a lot of explanation, with the supporters who had been “in” on the plan shouting in the affirmative. After the small no vote, the chairman quickly recorded an affirmative vote and moved on to the next item of business, ending the debate and allowing the group to start the process of rebuilding the constitution. (Kalt 2012; Laverdure 2010; Old Coyote 2011)

In this situation, the leadership came from the small grassroots group of young men seeking change in and for the benefit of the community instead of an individual with higher or special knowledge. In the nation building model, the concept of the charismatic leader referenced by Wallace rarely fits when using Weber’s strict definition. However, if it is changed to a broader term “charismatic leadership,” referencing the drive and encouragement from leaders who have access to special or ”higher” knowledge from education, experience, and training that has led to a modification of their personal mazeway, the concept is more applicable to the modern movements seen in Indian Country. In the revitalization movements throughout American History that were studied by Wallace and others, the charismatic leaders like Neolin and Tenskwatawa reorganized their mazeways based on the information provided from their visions and other supernatural sources. However, when looking at these reformations and new patterns with a critical eye, the influence of outside information, from Christian missionaries or other coinciding movements within nearby societies, is evident in the patterns and changes adopted. (See Byrn 2012) These charismatic leaders were able to combine this information into a
new mazeway or practice which was thought to be beneficial for the society, and eventually was adopted following their progress through their own revitalization arc.

**Starts and Stops: The Process of Revitalization**

“It was thanks to the revitalization movement that a traditional society in profound crisis, instead of being destroyed or absorbed by a more powerful one, had the possibility of being reconstituted through internal regenerative mechanisms. If the instinctive self-healing mechanisms worked, a segment of humanity emerged once more with an intact shield against anomie provided by a new or significantly modified nomos, a new sacred canopy.” (Griffin 2008:14)

When examining the history of revitalization movements, it is not only those which are immediately successful that become significant. As Wallace points out, the process of revitalization is not always a linear path. It is often abortive, sometimes requiring multiple attempts to move past the organization or adaptation stage of the process and onto the revitalization stage, where the same type of “failure” can still occur. He bases this on the relative focus on realism of the doctrine and the efforts at conflict management. (Wallace 1956:278-9)

This is similar to what has been observed with native nation building throughout recent history. Native nations who do not think ahead toward possible situations of conflict and economic challenges generally have issues with the success of their efforts, while those that prepare have a higher degree of success in comparison.

One of the case studies on this phenomenon centers on the Mashantucket Pequot Nation, who operate the Foxwoods Casino, which at one time was the largest in the United States. The nation did not plan ahead for potential challenges and relied solely on the casino for revenue, and developed dependency on per-capita payments to citizens off the massively successful venture, leading to a push for more development and growth. The nation embarked on the construction of a second casino on the grounds, the MGM at Foxwoods, drawing loans backed by casino revenue to do so. When the recession hit in 2008, the nation saw a sharp decline in gambling and
revenues from the casino. This downturn led to defaults on loans and a $2 Billion debt restructuring, ending their per-capita program in 2010, with transitional payments to citizens ending in 2012. (Hallenback 2012) The nation did not plan for any economic challenges, relying solely on the casino for revenue. They “rode the high” of the massive casino revenue without diversifying or planning for problems, leading to crisis when adversity struck. Since the crisis, the nation has worked to diversify their economic ventures, insulated themselves against failures or downturns, and worked to move away from per-capita dependency. In native nation building, it is not the first, or third, or even tenth attempt at revitalization of the governance structure that is important, but the one that is effective at dealing with stressors affecting the nation. In the required mazeway reconstruction, observation of past failures and lessons learned becomes significant in developing a model that is ultimately successful.

**Putting the Pieces Together**

![Wallace's Stages of the Revitalization Movement](image)

**Figure 4: Wallace’s Stages of the Revitalization Movement**

Wallace’s use of “steady state” in his model has the potential to be misinterpreted. There is an argument to be made that these zones should be renamed to “manageable levels of stress”
instead, as nations never are at a “steady” or flat line. There is an ever-changing level of stress from numerous sources beneath the surface due to environmental, social, economic, and even interpersonal needs, challenges, and issues. The only way the level would be flat in the real world would be a utopian situation, but from a practical standpoint, it could be achieved by averaging out the spikes and dips in the levels of stress experienced by the group prior to a prolonged increase in stress levels, which begins to break down the perceived mechanisms of stress management in the society. This can come from an increase in the frequency and intensity of major stressors, stress events, or pressure from outside sources, or from catastrophic events, such as genocide or epidemic.

When the society experiences these increased levels of stress, the perceived ability of the system to deal with the stress often declines as time wears on. In cases of drastic inclines in the frequency and levels of stress, or of the introduction of massive stressors by outside forces or catastrophe, this process can become accelerated, leaving individuals within the society unhappy with the mechanisms in place. Wallace points to the process of acculturation as a major driver for this stage, and indigenous history in the United States tends to prove his assumption. (Wallace 1956:269) When examining the timelines around revitalization movements, the period prior to the beginning of major change generally sees an increase in outside pressure to acculturate or alter cultural patterns. For the Tsalagi, as with many indigenous groups in colonial times, this pressure increase begins with the influx of outside diseases in the 1500’s following the Cortez expedition across the Southeast and into the lower and out town regions of Alabama and Georgia, as well as virgin soil epidemics from that time period and in the 1600’s. This wave gathers again when European colonists begin pressuring indigenous groups to cede lands for settlement, as dependency on trade goods rises, and starts to peak during the warfare of the late
1700’s and the height of the deer skin trade in the Southeast as pressure for resources skyrockets. Similar increases can be seen when examining Western indigenous groups later in the 1800’s as competition for resources increased, the introduction of trade goods led to increased dependency, and increased encroachment through western migration of settlers and traders altered migration and territorial patterns. This pattern exaggerates when the situations of modern native nations is examined. Many endured all these as well as catastrophic or genocidal events includingboarding schools, prolonged warfare, intentional depletion of resources, removal, confinement to reservations, changes to lifeways and access to resources, and many other events which border between the 2nd and 3rd stage of Wallace’s model for generations prior to the latest stage of revitalization. This period of prolonged stress, combined with intergenerational historical trauma, served to break down individual and societal confidence in traditional stress-management processes or systems within the society, leading to eventual cultural distortion.

When looking at the periods of increased stress for the Mississippi Choctaw and Citizen Potawatomi Nations, this historic, drawn out process is evident, but both see a spike in the time period leading up to their initial move toward change. For the Citizen Potawatomi, the “bad family reunion” council meetings and rampant quorum issues, paired with the embezzlement of the nation’s already incredibly meager assets by the chairman, capped off a complete breakdown in confidence in the governing structure. The nation also saw a citizenship crisis emerge from the ICC claim and the roll requirement in 1969, placing further stress on a strained governing system in the years leading up to their push for constitutional change. For the Mississippi Choctaw, the struggle for a reservation and recognition, followed by the downturn in employment due to mechanized farming and the loss of citizens through the boarding school system and BIA Direct
Employment Program in the 1950’s and early 1960’s exacerbated the stagnancy of their imposed governance system, hobbled by the Choctaw Agency and its interference.

In the cultural distortion stage, the stresses experienced by the society begins to force changes within the group. Individually, members might begin to experiment with mazeway changes to alleviate stress which is no longer being mitigated by the existing cultural structures or processes. It is in this period where modifications begin, often both overtly and covertly on an individual level, then leading to dissemination among the group. This type of cultural distortion can be seen in the Tsalagi example when the nation begins acquiescing to pressure to cede lands and sees the virtual appointment of a “chief,” stepping away from traditional governance patterns towards a collective voice at the behest of agents. This is also seen in the modifications of the economic patterns within the nation. In the late 1700’s, the plantation economy of the surrounding communities began to influence Cherokee farming and land management practices, with a “planter elite” emerging in the early 1800’s, especially following the civilization programs enacted under Article 14 of the Treaty of Hopewell and Thomas Jefferson’s administration. (Malone 1956:36, 50-51) The move toward cash crop agriculture and a plantation economy led to major mazeway shifts, with the children of traders and farmers obtaining increasingly more education during the period, including through boarding schools paid for by the war department. This period saw conflicts within the worldviews of the Tsalagi, as missionary efforts and schools led to a division between new English educated generations and those who carried on the old ways and only spoke Tsalagi. (Malone 1956:50-56) The attempts to mitigate stress caused by constant incursion, frontier pressures and warfare, and assimilation and acculturation pressures led the Tsalagi culture to begin a shift in the mid to late 1700’s which ultimately led to a massive
collective mazeway shift, stepping away from town-centered governance and worldviews to one of a centralized native nation.

This stage is more pronounced in the relatively drawn-out processes of nation building that the Mississippi Choctaw and Citizen Potawatomi Nations went through. For the Mississippi Choctaw, their self-described “Era of Change” began with the election of Phillip Martin in 1964 and the appointment of Robert Benn to the Choctaw Agency. These leaders came back to the nation, having gained experience and education elsewhere through both higher education and military training, indeed in part as a result of the stress the nation was experiencing through the boarding school system and lack of opportunities, and identified ways that the system did not work for the nation, setting out to make changes to how the Mississippi Choctaw looked out for their own and related to the Choctaw Agency. The establishment of the Choctaw Community Action Agency and the grant writing process that was undertaken represents the mazeway shift these leaders sparked, changing the way the nation related to the Choctaw Agency and how they viewed their governance system. Their dissemination of these ideas and changes to others in the group began the process toward revitalization and rebuilding of the nation’s governance structure following the push toward constitutional reform in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s.

As the society begins to recognize the cultural distortion, efforts to remedy the situation may arise in the form of revitalization. This is the most crucial step of the process, as the most drastic changes to the mazeway and society occur within this stage. It is also the time where the society experiences the highest levels of stress, as the concepts of changing major aspects within the culture to deal with the situation only exacerbates the already elevated stress levels within the group. Typically, this is where the concept of the prophet or charismatic leader comes in, as their
vision provides the blueprint for the renovations set to occur within the society to move to a more satisfactory state of stress management. Using the organismic analogy, this would be the stage where the “body” (society) would be going into arrest due to arrythmia, and the prophet would diagnose the issue, set out a plan of treatment, and direct where to attach the paddles to shock the “heart” (culture) it back into rhythm to hopefully save the society from decline. As stated previously, for the application of the model here, this leadership does not have to come from only one individual, but can be a synthesis or distillation of the ideas and knowledge several individuals put into action, often through the direction of one executive or prophet, as is often the case with native nation building. In Wallace’s model the revitalization stage is made up of six sub-steps which are required for a successful transition between stages. (Wallace 1956:270-275; See Figure 2)

The first of these steps is the individual mazeway reformation which must occur with the leader of the movement prior to mobilizing a plan or message. Individuals must alter how they view society and the interconnections therein to begin modifying the connections and pathways to manage the new stressors placed on the society. This was previously covered in the mazeway reformation section. The next step in the process is the communication of the ideas to the followers. To inspire a collective modification of the mazeway, the leader must effectively communicate their ideas to the other members of the society. In this application of the model, Wallace’s tenet of bringing the “convert” under the care of a supernatural being does not apply. (Wallace 1956:273) It would, however, help to examine the concept of individualized benefit in this stage. In native nation building, as well as with atheistic revitalization movements like Communism and Fascism, convincing individuals of the importance of the changes needed often comes down to the question of “how is this going to benefit me.” If a status quo has been
beneficial for an individual, they are far less likely to support changes. The mantra “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” is often referenced, but realistically the situation is often “if the break isn’t hurting me, why should I care?” or “the break is never going to be fixed, so why try?” Leaders often must focus on defining how the nation going to benefit and protect the citizens under the new system in comparison to the broken one which many have lost faith in. The communication stage is crucial to garnering support for any proposed changes, and if this stage is not completed thoroughly the movement will not succeed. In looking at native nation building on a larger scale, the communication stage is a crucial component to the expansion of the model to new nations. After the information is communicated to new converts, they then take the principles and apply to their own individualized movements, either locally or nationally, which often do not adhere to the exact specifications of the movement itself. During the height of Tenskwatawa’s movement in the early 1800’s, Tecumthe took his brother’s message to the Southeast, where sects within several of the more traditional Creek towns latched on to the message, welcoming in lower “prophets” brought by the leader and co-opting nativistic aspects of the message into what became the Red Stick Movement. (Braund 2012:89-93) This anti-American fervor and opposition to the national council ultimately led to the Creek War in 1813 between the White and Red factions within the nation, ultimately drawing in state militias to protect non-native settlements and put the uprising down.

The real planning phase of the movement comes in the organization stage. As leaders create converts through communication of their ideas, a plan must be made toward implementing these changes into society. The organization stage is where the blueprint is created for how the changes will be implemented and where they need to occur within society. It is in this stage where nations lay out the structure of the system they want to build and begin the process of
working toward implementing these aspects within their own system. Wallace defines the next stage in the process as adaptation, when opponents to the changes push back against the converts and modifications are made to aspects of the movement’s doctrine, structure, institutions, and even goals. In native nation building, these two stages tend to work in relative parallel with one another, with the outline being laid out and modified as the nation moves along. The adaptation stage is different from the other stages of the process, as it can ultimately last for the life of the movement, with leaders making micro-adjustments or modifications to suit the needs of the culture at a particular time. This aspect aligns with the concept of current cultural match within the native nation building approach, and the constant adjustments means the nation can keep up with changing circumstances, technology, and international issues. The Tsalagi Ayeli set up a type of adaptation stage in perpetuity within their original constitution, calling for a review at least every four years to maintain an up-to-date match between the governance structure and what the nation needed. In a move of organization, John Ross and a group of other leaders formally proposed the constitution in 1826, outlining the structure of the new government, the rights of citizens, and even the legal makeup of the nation. As a part of the adaptation stage as well, the nation called a constitutional convention where all male citizens could attend and elect delegates. This proposal faced backlash from a traditionalist faction led by White Path as a large majority of the delegates were English speaking, wealthy mixed-blood citizens. After several councils and negotiations, the motion moved forward, and in promotion of transparency the national council communicated the constitution and laws in English and Cherokee to every literate household in the nation through the weekly national newspaper, building on the previous book of laws and punishments provided to every household in 1818. (Malone 1956:84-87,159; McLoughlin 1986:394-396)
The adaptation stage is seen in the changes the Citizen Potawatomi Nation implemented, with smaller changes like the citizenship criteria and absentee ballot system going through in the 1985 constitution, followed by incremental modifications and improvements being added on until the major constitutional reform and governmental overhaul in 2007. The Mississippi Choctaw saw several legal challenges and challenges from the Choctaw Agency during their push toward change, eventually changing their term limits and delaying the takeover of the school system from the Bureau of Indian Affairs following a referendum leading up to their constitutional reform.

The fifth sub-stage in this stage of Wallace’s model is that of cultural transformation. This is when the new system is accepted by the greater part of the group and goes into practice. This stage sees stress levels come into relative control under the new system and sees a major collective shift in the mazeway and the culture of the group, with collective group action serving as a major hallmark. (Wallace 1956:275) In native nation building, this stage occurs as the changes made in the planning and negotiating phases which preceded are put into action, reorganizing institutions, changing laws, and moving the nation toward a different approach than the one that had previously failed to fulfill the needs of the society. As these changes are proven to be effective, they are cemented into the workings of the nation, becoming the new modus operandi. In Wallace’s model, leaders then have the ability to step back from totalitarian control of the movement and focus on the preservation of the doctrine and rituals, although it is not mandatory. In real world applications, the direction and controls over the movement’s development and ultimate goal does not require a totalitarian style of leadership, but a similar circumstance occurs when the new system is built into the institutions, creating a system that will outlast an administration or leader, alleviating the necessity for the individual or group to
continue filling the charismatic leadership role. In native nation building, the routinization stage comes when the system is proven to be effective, especially after the procedures and policies are cemented, providing the nation with capable institutions and practices which will outlast the initial leadership’s direct involvement. While the nation might not be operating like a well-oiled machine at this stage, they have moved from requiring a total rebuild to keeping a can of oil and a few tools on hand to work on squeaking parts. When this occurs, the nation transfers into the final stage of Wallace’s model, moving back into a manageable level of stress, or “new steady state.” This does not mean everything is perfect, but it is a situation where changes are no longer critical and can be made at a more deliberate pace than during the revitalization stage. In this stage, the nation has normalized the operations and cultural changes coming out of the revitalization and has remapped the collective mazeway. The “new way” of doing things simply becomes “the way” of doing them.

**Visualizing the Stress Arc**

To visualize this pattern Figure 5 recreates the stress arc of the revitalization movement without the lines indicating changing stress levels for clarity. Each broad stage of Wallace’s movement is listed along the arc in bold, and aspects of that stage specific to the Tsalagi Ayeli revitalization in the Early Republic are listed alongside the corresponding stages. For clarity, the “revitalization stage” is not broken down into the 6 individual sub-stages. As the nation progresses, the individual stressors experienced by the society increases, pushing them out of the steady state and into the next stage, where stress management mechanisms begin to fail. As the culture begins to distort during the acculturation surge in the late 1700’s, this rises even further, pushing them to begin changing aspects of the culture and governance structure to try to manage the failure of the mechanisms. Following the rise of the planter-elite class and the educated
mixed-blood leadership in the early 1800’s, the nation starts to move into the revitalization phase, implementing incremental change within an overall span of about 35 years. This change accelerated following the establishment of the bicameral legislature in 1817 and the educational systems which were established during this time, leading to a shift in the mazeway and cultural ideas of the nation during that generation, especially following the creation of the syllabary and the rise in literacy across the nation. During this stage, the stress levels of the nation are at their peak and start to slope down as effective institutions are created and implemented, lessening the impacts of outside stressors and developing new mechanisms of stress management. Following the ratification of the constitution, the nation moves out of the cultural transformation sub-stage and into the routinization stage, eventually moving into a more manageable stress level, which unfortunately is upended following removal and the start of the Cherokee Civil War in Oklahoma, but settles back into a relatively manageable level in the 1840’s.

![Figure 5 Tsalagi Ayeli Revitalization Arc](image)

**Conclusions**

Social and cultural changes are a given within all societies, but the deliberate action and modification of the community mazeway involved in a revitalization movement is what sets it
apart from the more drawn-out processes of acculturation and cultural change. (Wallace 1956:265) In taking direct agency and attempting to change a situation or deal with circumstances, indigenous nations exercise their sovereignty and create an intentional movement instead of a circumstantial event, modifying the collective mazeway of the nation to fit the new systems into their own cultural map. While the fit is not perfect, Wallace’s model can be slightly modified to explain native nation building as a semi-secular revitalization movement among indigenous peoples in the United States. One of the trickier fits lies in the revitalization stage, as the other stages occur within many different social movements across any number of cultures. When they are broken down, the sub-steps in this stage can be specifically applied to the process of native nation building, outlining challenges facing native nations taking part in the process of modifying their practices and institutions to fit the nation building approach and away from the standard approach. Each nation must deal with the sub-steps under the revitalization step, even if they are not dealing with fully secular revitalization movement. Mazeway reformation is vital to the success of the movement. Communicating the new process or ideas to others to gain support, organizing a plan of attack, dealing with criticisms or unplanned setbacks, executing that plan, and building a system that will institutionally withstand pressures from without and within are all key components to native nation building. In this way, native nation building is a revitalization movement. The process focuses on building a system to allow the nation to mitigate incredible amounts of stress from outside pressure, historical trauma, social issues, and systematic colonialism and to not only survive, but to thrive through utilization and actions of tribal sovereignty. By focusing inward and fixing major issues facing the nation, and by rebuilding or replacing failing institutions, the nation is able to refocus outwardly and present a new force
internationally, one of stability and sovereignty within their cultural, governmental, and economic institutions.

**Further Research**

This analysis just scratches the surface of how Wallace’s model could be applied to the process of native nation building or utilized to further studies on the process. Here three nations have been quickly profiled, but the process has gone on in countless others. There are over 570 federally recognized tribes in the United States today alone, with hundreds of non-recognized or state-recognized groups just in the United States. The modern defined process of native nation building and the tenets contained therein have been utilized by indigenous groups across the globe, with particular emphasis in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, each having their own set of unique circumstances, international relationships, definitions, and policies relating to indigenous peoples within their created jurisdictional boundaries. An obvious avenue for further research would be how the processes in areas outside of the United States relate to the application of the model to those within the United States. With varying degrees of independence or sovereignty from the federal and crown governments, the application might need further modification to fit individual circumstances. Another intriguing possibility is examining the process of native nation building as an international whole and seeing if the application still stands as it does on the individual level. While each instance of native nation building can be seen as a revitalization movement in itself, it would be interesting to see if the model applies similarly to the international collective “movement” studied by the Harvard Project, Native Nations Institute, and others. National boundaries could be utilized as a secondary level of organization as well, as indigenous peoples in the United States “Indian Country” have a different set of laws and policies governing their relationship with the federal government than
those in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and dozens of other jurisdictions across the world.
Moving away from questions specific to native nation building, another area of inquiry could be
to ask why revitalization movements take religious or ethno-religious forms in some instances
and political in others, and whether that disparity is significant in the outcome of the movement.
Finally, a larger question needing research would be at what level does mazeway reformation
alter indigenous culture? Within the literature for native nation building, the concept of a current
cultural match is a significant determinant for the success of institutions. However, after the
tremendous amount of trauma, sustained colonialism, and genocidal practices endured by
indigenous peoples in the United States and worldwide, when does that “current culture” begin
to move away from the accepted definition of indigenous and toward full acculturation or
assimilation into the “dominant” society, if it can be defined as such. These are just a handful of
questions which could stem from this application of Wallace’s model, and there are many other
possibilities out there, depending on individual focus and worldview.
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