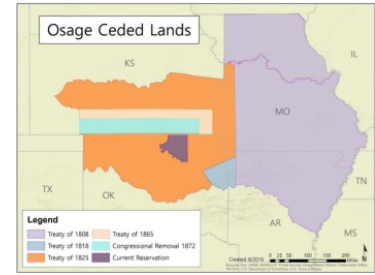


## OSAGE CEDED LANDS - Fact Sheet

### Use with “Osage Ceded Lands” Map & Text



- Colonialism** - extending power through diplomacy or military force.  
**First European colonialists:** Osage lands were first claimed by the Spanish and French.
- U.S. Louisiana Purchase 1803:** In 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase, the French “sold” the Osage land, along with billions of other acres of native land, to the United States.
- Taking and giving away other people’s property:** As white settlers moved west onto new lands, the U.S. government made the Native Americans move out. Supposedly, the U.S. government then “gave” those Indians new lands (further west) to live on. However, those new lands *already belonged to other Indians*. For example, the Sac and Fox, Kickapoo, Delaware, Shawnee, Cherokee and other tribes were forced onto Osage lands. Having new emigrant tribes move in on Osage land naturally put pressure on limited hunting and natural resources and resulted in conflict (Burns 158, 184, 191).
- Population Decline**

  - Disease** struck the Osage repeatedly, with devastating epidemics of diseases brought in by white contact, including influenza, cholera, measles, typhoid, tuberculosis, and worst of all, smallpox (Burns 239-242).
  - Starvation** was real. The violence of the Civil War period severely disrupted Osage traditional bison hunts, and the U.S. deliberate policy of over-hunting bison to remove the Indians’ main source of food resulted in bison becoming so difficult to find, the Osage’s last major bison hunt was in 1881 (Burns 361). This, along with competition for other game with other displaced tribes and white settlers, meant the Osage traditional food sources were gone. The government delayed payments owed the Osage, and white intruders stole and destroyed Osage food crops in 1870 and 1871, as well as damaging their lodges (Burns 347).
  - Osage population declined** from estimates of 18,000 in 1800, to 10,000 in 1840’s, down to 3,500 in 1873 (Burns 242-4, 356). Due to malnutrition and lack of shelter, an estimated one in four Osages perished in the first year after their removal from Kansas in 1872 (Burns 346). Historian Louis Burns writes, “Children and their mothers died in vast numbers” (Burns 177). Sharp declines continued: only 1,729 Osage people in 1897 (Brock 37).
- No War - Military threats.** Although militarily they were considered one of the most powerful tribes in America, early on, the Osage had “determined never to make war on the United States, and they never did” (Burns 133). They had gotten along well in trading relationships with the French, and trusted the U.S. government’s promises to protect specified Osage lands from white settlement. This trust of the U.S. turned out to be a mistake. Although a few isolated incidents of Osage armed resistance occurred, in the face of overwhelming U.S. military force, these were too little and too late.

6. **Osage Land Cessions 1808 - 1872: Cede** - surrender under pressure. **Cession** - land that has been ceded. Due to severe declines in population, the endless influx of European settlers, broken promises for protection, and military threats, between 1808 and 1872, the Osage had little choice but to eventually cede all their lands in present-day Missouri, Arkansas, and Kansas, and most of their land in Oklahoma. In 1872, they moved to their current reservation. **See “Ceded Lands Map” & Legend showing the six stages of this process.**
7. **The Treaty Process - Osage lands were ceded in a series of agreements or “treaties” characterized by the following:**
- **Extremely Small Payment for huge tracts of land:** For example, with the **Treaty of 1808**, the Osage ceded 52 million acres for less than 1/6<sup>th</sup> of a cent per acre (Burns 158).
  - **Unfair tactics:** Many treaties involved false claims, miscommunications (intentional or due to language differences), bribery (payoffs), and coercion (threats). (Burns 166). For example, in the **Treaty of 1808**, due to miscommunications, the Osage did not understand that they were actually ceding full ownership of these lands, and had thought they would still be able to hunt there (Burns 158, 166). William Clark (of Lewis & Clark expedition) was involved in the negotiation of the devastating **Treaty of 1825**. Clark later had great regret for his part saying “it was the hardest treaty on the Indians he had ever made and that if he was to be damned hereafter it would be for making that treaty” (Mathews 521).
  - **Broken Promises - Illegal White Occupation:** Also, the Indians were promised protection to be allowed to stay on the new lands forever: “as long as grass grows and water flows.” However, later these **promises were always broken** as whites eventually illegally occupied those lands and then made the Osage move again. For example, the U.S. promised that the small strip of land in southern Kansas - a small fraction of their previous land holdings - would be protected and held only for the Osage occupation. However, the U.S. government allowed white settlers to trespass, move in, and build homes and farms on the Osage land. Laura Ingalls Wilder’s family in *Little House on the Prairie* were living *illegally* on land that belonged to the Osage Indians who at the time were in terrible circumstances and needed all the land and game they could get. **[See Related LESSON: LITTLE HOUSE ON THE OSAGE PRAIRIE]**

## 8. Impact on the Osage People and Culture

Due to their essential connection to the land, these losses of land were shattering to the Osage, not only physically, but also culturally and spiritually. In his *History of the Osage People*, Osage historian Louis Burns writes:

“Osage culture was a culture of the sky and earth. Loss of either meant a destruction of the culture. These cessions were more than mere yielding of territory. Along with the cessions went the sacred animals and the responsibility for protecting the land. Thus, each cession weakened the Osage spirit and limited their food base. Dispirited and undernourished, the Osages were increasingly vulnerable to assaults on their lands and culture.” (Burns 166)

Sources: Brock, Lou W. *The Osage Timeline*. Pawhuska, OK: Osage Tribal Museum, 2014. Burns, Louis F. *History of the Osage People*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004. Linsenmeyer, Penny T. “A Study of Laura Ingalls Wilder “Little House on the Prairie.” pp 168-185. *Kansas History* Autumn 2001. Mathews, John Joseph *The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961. “Osage Ceded Lands” map & poster - Osage Culture Traveling Trunk learning program (2010), Missouri State University, Osage Nation, History Museum on the Square. Compiled 2018.