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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2016 Volume I: Contemporary American Indian History

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## **Relationships of African Americans and Creeks in Oklahoma to 1936**

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by Patricia Hodge

Most Oklahomans would say they have Native American heritage, including those at my inner-city three-quarter African-American populated high school. Last year, I asked my students how many had Native ancestors. Close to 70 percent said they did. However, when I asked how many have a CDIB card (proof of Indian blood) or a tribal membership card, less than 10 percent said yes. Why then do we self-identify? Is identification the same as having blood quantum and how does that work with the few that have actual citizenship in an American Indian tribe? The relationship of the Creeks with African-Americans is a long and intricate one, but I think it is a good window into understanding a lot of the relationships seen across the country. The complications of tribal citizenship, blood quantum, ethnic identity and tribal self-determination are a microcosm of what happened in the larger history of the United States, including the larger issues of slavery, removal, reservations, allotment, termination, citizenship, Jim Crow laws and the exclusion of Creek Freedmen. This unit will look at the relationships between African-Americans and the Muscogee Creek up to the time of Indian New Deal in 1936.

(Developed for U. S. History, grade 11 ; recommended for U. S. History and Oklahoma History, grades 9-12, and AP U. S. History, grades 10-12)

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