

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

### Oral History - Seminole Wars

**Grade(s):** Honors level 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> grade

**Time (minutes):** 3 or 4 45-minute class periods with an additional date for an “Oral Traditions Festival” (It may be longer, as I give my students the passages to read for homework, so I do not have to spend time actually reading in class.)

#### **Lesson Overview:**

Students will be reading about The Dade Massacre by W.S. Steele, creating a timeline of events, investigating the idea of oral history, and how this event is important to the development of Florida and the United States. We also investigate the ideas of Oral Traditions and how important that is to our family histories.

#### **Relevant Social Studies Standards:**

SS.8.A.1.1 - Provide supporting details for an answer from text, interview for oral history, check validity of information from research/text, and identify strong vs. weak arguments.

SS.8.A.1.5 - Identify, within both primary and secondary sources, the author, audience, format, and purpose of significant historical documents.

SS.8.A.4.17 - Examine key events and peoples in Florida history as each impacts this era of American history.

SS.912.A.1.3 - Utilize timelines to identify the time sequence of historical data.

SS.912.A.6.15 - Examine key events and peoples in Florida history as they relate to United States history.

LAFS.1112.RH.3.9 - Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

#### **Required Materials:**

- Chart Paper and markers
- Copy of “Last Command: The Dade Massacre” by W.S. Steele (class set if reading this as a group)
  - The document is accessible via this link:  
[http://digitalcollections.fiu.edu/tequesta/files/1986/86\\_1\\_01.pdf](http://digitalcollections.fiu.edu/tequesta/files/1986/86_1_01.pdf) .
  - The statements from Ransom Clarke, Alligator, and Pacheco have been included at the bottom of this document.
- Copy of “Trail of Tears” document (Included below)
- Teacher’s guide for Oral Traditions for Beginners  
<https://www.ahtahthiki.com/downloads/Oral-History-for-Beginners---Text.pdf>

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

- Computers with Internet

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to identify and describe the Seminole Tribe and their development in Florida.

Students will be able to analyze the Dade Massacre and be able to make connections to the Little Bighorn Massacre that happens 41 years later.

Students will be able to form opinions on why it is unusual to see the Native Americans side of history.

Students will be able to create their own oral histories or record the oral histories of their family.

### **Special Vocabulary:**

Oral Tradition

### **Procedure:**

1. First, discuss what the students know about the Seminole Tribe in Florida. Keep a list of what students know on a piece of chart paper. Expect to see FSU or football on the list. If you are a teacher out of the state of Florida, they may not even know that.
2. Then have students read the background of the Seminole Tribe either using the computers with Internet you have or by printing out the information from the Seminole Tribe website. <https://www.semtribe.com/History/Introduction.aspx>
3. Optional: Have the students try and put together a timeline of Seminole information. Students should get the sheet with important dates of the tribe and their goal is to get as many correct as possible. This is taken from the Timeline on the Seminole Tribe website. <https://www.semtribe.com/History/Timeline.aspx>
4. On a piece of chart paper, have students write down what they know about the interactions between Native Americans and the US Army or white settlers.
5. Pass out the story of Chief Josie Billie. Have the class read the story. As they are reading, have them highlight things they find that were results of the white settlers moving into the area in yellow, highlight things that are specific to the Native Floridians life in pink, and then anything that surprised them (on either side) in blue. If they have highlighted something in pink or yellow and they want to highlight it as their surprise as well, have them just underline it in blue.
6. On another piece of chart paper, make three columns labeled “Settlers” “Native Floridians,” and “Surprised me!” Then have students go up one at a time adding information to whichever column they feel comfortable adding to. There cannot be the same answer up there twice.
7. Discuss the different items. I specifically spend more time on the “Surprised me!” column. Make sure you spend some time discussing the fact this was an oral history/oral story about

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Chief Josie Billie and he was very specific that Ms. Siniff remember it exactly. Why would he do that?

8. Next, pass out [“The Dade Massacre”](#) breaking it up into one or two-page increments and have students read together. I hold the “Statement of Ransom Clarke,” “Statement of Alligator,” and “Statement of Pacheco” separately.
9. As the students are reading their specific pages, they need to create a timeline of events that happen during their reading. Tell them to be as specific as possible. The point of this exercise is to have students understand this isn’t something the Seminoles decided to do on a whim.
10. Have them come together as a class and fill a group timeline. As the groups go up to add their information, have them explain their section and what they learned. This way the students see the whole event from beginning to end.
11. After everything is up there, have students come up with reasons why there is more information from the US Army side, than the Natives side. Does this surprise anyone?
12. Then break the class up into three groups of uneven numbers. Give the larger group the “Statement of Ransom Clarke.” The next sized group the “Statement of Alligator.” And the third group the “Statement of Pacheco”. Discuss the different viewpoints. Why is Ransom Clarke’s so long versus the other two? What reasons can they come up with?
13. For homework, I have students do some research on current challenges our Native American populations are facing. They must bring in an article of something currently affecting Native Americans and what is being done to assist them with these challenges.
14. Next day, spend a few minutes discussing the newspaper articles the students found. Have them take out a half sheet of paper and make a connection from the challenge they found to the challenges being faced by the Natives. Were the Natives fought back violently with the Dade Massacre, what are the Natives doing now? Is it successful?
15. Bring up oral traditions again. How many Natives or slaves could read and write? What happened to either one after the Massacre? Who did the Natives have to tell the story too? Would they want to? How important are oral traditions in present day? Most of my students tell me not very important because of social media, but then I ask them how did their family come to the United States or even how did they come to live in Florida. I point out to them that these are oral traditions that are passed down and not necessarily written down for people to read on social media. For a great set of guidelines, look at the <https://www.ahtathiki.com/downloads/Oral-History-for-Beginners---Text.pdf>. There are also oral history examples available to listen to.

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

16. **\*\*OPTIONAL\*\*** Have students talk to the oldest member of their family and have them ask about that family members grandparents or parents (so the student's great-great grandparents or great-grandparents, assuming they are able to speak to their grandparents). Or have the students brainstorm up an event in history (I like to go from the JFK assassination) where there is a specific date and have them ask the oldest person they know what they remember of this event. If the family wasn't in the United States at the time, have the students do a little research to find out what was happening their country, and get the story. Each story should be less than 5 minutes long. One day have an "Oral Traditions" festival where the students are able to tell their family's story. I have the student's give me a run down of the story before we listen to it. I don't make a rubric for this, I just give them some guidelines:

Must be between 3 and 5 minutes long.

Must be an MP4 or video recording of your family member.

It must be you speaking to your family member. If you need a translator, they can talk to them, but you must be there too.

You must get permission from your family member to share their story.

17. After everything is said and done, I bring back the class back the next day for a decompression of the "Oral Tradition Festival." Students are required to reflect on everything they learned. I have included the questions I ask my students.

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

### STATEMENT OF ALLIGATOR

Just as day was breaking we moved out of the swamp into the pinebarren. I counted, by direction of Jumper, one hundred and eighty warriors. Upon approaching the road, each man chose his position on the west side; opposite, on the east side, there was a pond. Every warrior was protected by a tree, or secreted in the high palmettoes. About nine o'clock in the morning the command approached. In advance, some distance, was an officer on a horse, who, Micanopy said, was the captain; he knew him personally; had been his friend at Tampa. So soon all the soldiers were opposite between us and the pond, perhaps twenty yards off, Jumper gave the whoop, Micanopy fired the first rifle, the signal agreed upon, when every Indian arose and fired, which laid upon the ground, dead, more than half the white men. The cannon was discharged several times, but the men who loaded it were shot down as soon as the smoke cleared away; the balls passed over our heads. The soldiers shouted and whooped, and the officers shook their swords and swore. There was a little man, a great brave, who shook his sword at the soldiers and said, 'God-dam!' no rifle ball could hit him. As we were returning to the swamp supposing all were dead, an Indian came up and said the white men were building a fort of logs. Jumper and myself, with ten warriors returned. As we approached we saw six men behind two logs placed one above another, with the cannon a short distance off. This they discharged at us several times, but we avoided it by dodging behind trees just as they applied the fire. We soon came near, as the balls went over us. They had guns but no powder; we looked in the boxes afterwards and found they were empty. When I got inside the log pen, there was three white men alive, whom the negros put to death, after a conversation in English. There was a brave man in the pen; he would not give up; he seized an Indian; Jumper's cousin, took away his rifle, and with one blow with it beat his brains, then ran some distance up the road; but two Indians on horseback overtook him, who, afraid to approach, stood at a distance and shot him down. The firing had ceased, and all was quiet when we returned to the swamp about noon. We left many negros upon the ground looking at the dead men. Three warriors were killed and five wounded.

### Statement of Ransom Clarke

It was 8 o'clock. Suddenly I heard a rifle shot in the direction of the advance guard, and this was immediately followed by a musket shot from that quarter. Captain Fraser had rode by me a moment before in that direction, I never saw him afterwards. I had not time to think of the meaning of these shots, before a volley, as if from a thousand rifles, was poured in upon us from the front, and all along our left flank. I looked around me, and it seemed as if I was the only one left standing in the right wing. Neither could I, until several other vollies had been fired at us, see an enemy and when I did, I could only see their heads and arms peering out from the long grass, far and near, and from behind pine trees. The ground seemed to me an open pine barren, no hammock near that I could see. On our right, and a little to our rear, was a large pond of water some distance off. All around us were heavy pine trees, very open, particularly towards the left and abounding with long high grass. The first fire of the Indians was the most destructive, seemingly killing or disabling one half our men.



## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

We promptly three ourselves behind trees, and opened a sharp fire of musketry. I for one, never fired without seeing my man, that is, his head and shoulders -- the Indians chiefly fired lying or squatting in the grass. Lieutenant Bassinger fired five or six rounds of canister from the cannon. This appeared to frighten the Indians, and they retreated over a little hill to our left, one half or three quarters of a mile off, after firing not more than 12 or 15 rounds. We immediately then began to fell trees, and erect a little triangular breastwork. Some of us went forward to gather cartridge boxes from the dead, and to assist the wounded. I had seen Major Dade fall to the ground by the first volley, and his horse dashed into the midst of the enemy. Whilst gathering the cartridges I saw Lieutenant Mudge sitting with his back reclining against a tree - his head fallen, and evidently dying-. I spoke to him, but he did not answer. The interpreter, Louis, it is said, fell by the first fire. (We have since learned that this fellow shammed death - that his life was afterwards spared through the intercession of the chief Jumper, and that being an educated negro, he read all the dispatches and letters that were found about the dead to the victors.)

We had barely raised our breastwork knee high, when we again saw the Indians advancing in great numbers over the hill to our left. They came on boldly till within a long musket shot, when they spread themselves from tree to tree to surround us. We immediately extended as Light Infantry, covering ourselves by the trees, and opening a brisk fire from cannon and musketry. The former I don't think could have done much mischief, the Indians were so scattered.

Captain Gardner, Lieutenant Bassinger, and Dr. Gatlin, were the only officers left unhurt by the volley which killed Major Dade. Lieutenant Henderson had his left arm broken, but he continued to load his musket and fire it, resting on the stump, until he was finally shot down towards the close of the second attack, and during the day he kept up his spirits and cheered the men. Lieutenant Keyes had both his arms broken in the first attack; they were bound up and slung in a handkerchief, and he sat for the remainder of the day until he was killed, reclining against the breastwork - his head often reposing upon it - regardless of everything that was passing around him.

Our men were by degrees all cut down. We had maintained a steady fight from 8 until 2 p.m. or thereabouts, and allowing three quarters of an hour interval between the first and second attack, had been pretty busily engaged for more than 5 hours. Lieutenant B. was the only officer left alive and severely wounded. He told me as the Indians approached to lay down and feign myself dead. I looked through the logs, and saw savages approaching in great numbers. A heavy made Indian of middle stature, painted down to the waist, (corresponding in description to Micanopy) seemed to be chief. He made then a speech frequently pointing to the breastwork. At length, they charged into the work; there was none to offer resistance, and they did not seem to suspect the wounded being alive - offering no indignity, but stepping about carefully, quietly stripping off our accoutrements and carrying away our arms. They then retired in a body in the direction from whence they came.

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Immediately upon their retreat, forty or fifty negroes on horseback galloped up and alighted, tied their beasts, and commenced with horrid shouts and yells the butchery of the wounded, together with an indiscriminate plunder, stripping the bodies of the dead of clothing, watches, and money, and splitting open the heads of all who showed the least sign of life, with their axes and knives, and accompanying their bloody work with obscene and taunting derisions, and with frequent cries of "what have you got to sell?"

Lieutenant B. hearing the negroes butchering the wounded, at length sprang up and asked them to spare his life. They met him with the blows of their axes, and their fiendish laughter. Having been wounded in five different places myself, I was pretty well covered with blood, and two scratches that I had received on my head gave to me the appearance of having been shot through the brain, for the negroes, after catching me up by my heels, threw me down, saying "d. . n him, he's dead enough!" They then stripped me of my clothes, shoes and hat, and left me. After stripping all the dead in this manner, they trundled off the cannon in the direction the Indians had gone, and went away. I saw them first shoot down the oxen in their gear, and burn the wagon.

One of the soldiers who escaped, says they threw the cannon into the pond, and burned its carriage also. Shortly after the negroes went away, one Wilson, of Captain G's company, crept from under some of the dead bodies, and hardly seemed to be hurt at all. He asked me to go back to the Fort, and I was going to follow him, when, as he jumped over the breastwork, an Indian sprang from behind a tree and shot him down. I then lay quiet until 9 o'clock that night, when Decourcy the only living soul beside myself, and I started upon our journey. We knew it was nearest to go to Fort King, but we did not know the way, and we had seen enemies retreat in that direction. As I came out I saw Dr. G. lying stripped amongst the dead. The last I saw of him whilst living, was kneeling behind the breastwork, with two double barrel guns by him, and he said, "Well, I have got four barrels for them!" Captain G. after being severely wounded, cried out, "I can give you no more orders, my lads, do your best!" I last saw a negro spurn his body, saying with an oath, "that's one of their officers." (G. was dressed in soldier clothes.)

My comrade and myself got along quite well until the next day, when we met an Indian on horseback, and with rifle coming up the road. Our only chance was to separate - we did so. I took the right, and he the left of the road. The Indian pursued him. Shortly afterwards I heard a rifle shot, and a little after, another. I concealed myself among some scrub and saw palmetto, and after awhile saw the Indian pass, looking for me. Suddenly, however, he put spurs to his horse and went off at a gallop towards the road.

I made something of a circuit before I struck the beaten track again. That night I was a good deal annoyed by the wolves, who had scented my blood, and came very close to me; the next day, the 30th, I reached the Fort.

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

Steele, W. S. 1986 *Last Command: The Dade Massacre*. Tequesta. 12-14

### STATEMENT OF PACHECO

About 10 o'clock, while I was with the advance guard, Captain Frazer and I turned aside to examine an old gray horse we found by the road, and finding it worthless, had returned to the road, and had nearly overtaken the advance guard, when I heard a single rifle shot, and I looked back to see if someone was shooting game, but just in time to see Major Dade fall just in front of me, shot in the breast. Although this was perfectly open country, and I had just looked carefully for Indians ahead, the country was now filled with large numbers of them on our left, coming for us with the war-whoop; I immediately threw down my gun and laid down behind a tree, very much frightened. As I could speak the Seminole language, I begged each one for my life, as they leveled their guns at me, and they were not a few, telling them I was a slave and was doing what I was bidden, etc. Finally Jumper, the chief in command, interfered and ordered as well as he then could, that I should not be shot, but even after this, one Indian was determined to kill me, but fortunately another Indian got his rifle ball stuck in his gun and ran, when the other Indians seeing this one run, became frightened, and all ran, when Jumper again took me and put me under guard. The same Indian, though, still assured me that when he came back he would kill me yet, but, luckily for me, he was shot by the whites. The battle lasted from about 10 o'clock in the morning until nearly sunset.



## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

### “Trail of Tears”

Edna DeHass Siniff narrates a story that Seminole chief Josie Billie (1887-1980) told to her

I kept begging for him to tell me stories because I missed my book so much. Then he told me the story of the Trail of Tears for the Seminoles; and he made me repeat it numerous times, and I was so afraid I would forget it and leave something out or change something because he said you cannot change it. When you give it back you have to give it back exactly the way I told it to you. And so when I got back from the Everglades I wrote it down and put it in a little notebook. And then years later I went back and got that story and I entered it into my computer so that I would not change the story, and so if it is permissible I will read that.

This is Josie Billie’s story, and this is the way he told it to me.

There were many tribes living in Florida when the first white men came. We were not called Seminole. Each tribe had its own name. I am from the Creek. We didn’t live in chickees like this. We lived in wood houses; we lived in villages on good land. We had large gardens where we grew corn, beans, and squash. The whole village worked in the gardens. We dried the grains and ground them. We hunted for wild meat.

When the Spanish came they brought live food -- cattle, chickens, sheep, and hogs. We gathered the cattle they left behind and began raising them. We had large herds of cattle before the soldiers came. We were a happy people.

One of the tribes living here was the Calusa. The Calusa made large canoes. They were seagoing people. They went to the islands in the Caribbean and around the Gulf waters to all the tribes. They traveled up the coast of Florida as far as North Carolina. The [Calusa] traded with other tribes. They brought seeds and things that we could use. They carried information to all the people on their travels. They told us the white man made slaves of people on the islands and that many were killed. When the soldiers came to our lands they destroyed our fields, they burned our homes, they stole our cattle. They forced us off our good land. We defended our land.

The Seminole Wars went on for years. We fought the soldiers. In the beginning we didn’t have guns like the soldiers. We used bows and arrows and knives. We knew where the soldiers would walk. Our men hid along those trails. Some were high in the trees using bird calls to tell us where the soldiers were. We would quietly take the last man in the line. Our strength was greater than his. We would pull him into the palmetto. Before he knew what had happened the soldier was dead. We would take everything we could use from him. We did this over and over.

When the soldiers started to attack our families, we moved the women and children and the elder south of where the Tamiami Trail is today. There was a large island in the swamp that was completely surrounded by wet sand that no man or animal could pass over. There was one narrow place that had ground strong enough to support a man. The width of that trail was about two feet. The wet sand came up to our knees when we walked on the trail. We took everything from the villages to this island. We kept our families there for many years. The soldiers never found this place. The Seven Years’ War ended when the general promised us we could live on our land in peace. He invited us to Tampa Bay to celebrate the end of the war. He had a big boat there where we were told the feast would be. When all the Indians present were on the boat, the soldiers pulled up the anchor and sailed away. We were



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery  
Administration



Department  
of History

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials

trapped. Some young men jumped off the boat and began swimming to shore. The soldiers shot them. The boat stopped when it came to New Orleans. More soldiers came around us; they pushed and shoved us to make us walk.

We walked to Oklahoma. My grandmother was on that walk. She died along the trail. When an old person could no longer walk, the soldiers dragged them off the trail and left them to die. Many of my people died on the way. Many of my people escaped from the soldiers at night and walked back to Florida. Strong young men and women followed the trail toward the Gulf of Mexico. They walked along the shoreline and in the marshes until they were home. Oklahoma was not a good place for us. Many of my people stayed in Oklahoma.

That's the end of that story.

## Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials



Josie Billie, family, and dog - Big Cypress Swamp. Public Domain.

<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/50623>

Born on December 12, 1887, Josie Billie was the son of the first Indian to receive a formal education in Florida. A Seminole medicine man and long-time public spokesman for the Florida Seminoles, Billie was also a Baptist minister. He was a frequent participant in the Florida Folk Festival and lived on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in Hendry County until his death in 1980.