

John Ross  
**Koo-wi-s-gu-wi**



October 3, 1790- August 1, 1866

John Ross served as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1826-1866, serving through trying times for the Nation, such as the Trail of Tears and the Civil War.

Ross was born to a Cherokee mother and a Scottish father. Throughout his early life, he learned both English and Cherokee. His career began early, in 1811, when he was appointed Indian Agent. He served as Adjutant of a Cherokee Regiment under Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812.

In 1816, Ross went on his first trip to Washington D.C. where he became the principal negotiator because he was bilingual. In 1817, he was elected to the Cherokee Council and became the president in 1818. Then in 1824, he petitioned the United States Congress for a redress of Cherokee grievances, making the Cherokee the first tribe to do so.

One thing Ross was adamant about was that the Cherokee should not have to move to Indian Territory. The Cherokee were split into two sides, forming two political parties. His party was called the National Party and his opposition was called the Treaty Party. The Treaty Party was the one to sign the Treaty of New Echota on December 29, 1835. This treaty forced the Cherokee to move by 1838. The American Government upheld and supported this treaty, John Ross did not. Nonetheless, the Cherokee were forced from their homeland. One-fourth of the Cherokee would die on the Trail of Tears, including John Ross's wife.

Leading up to the Civil War, the National Party became the Union Party and the Treaty Party became the Southern Party, and one of their main divisions was slavery. Ross originally preached neutrality in the war, but he eventually signed a treaty with the Confederacy.

Ross was married twice in his life. His first wife was Quatie Brown Henley (1790-1839) and his second wife was Mary Brian Stapler (1826-1865). He had seven children.

Ross died in 1866, on a trip to Washington D.C. where he was negotiating a Reconstruction treaty.

## **Associated Vocabulary**

**Andrew Jackson**- an American soldier and politician who became the 7th president in 1829, he was the President who enacted the Indian Removal Act

**Trail of Tears**- forced relocation of the Cherokee people from their homeland in the southeast to new territory in Oklahoma that was enacted between 1838 and 1839.

**Indian Removal Act**- was signed by Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830; it allowed for the United States to negotiate with the southeastern Native Americans for their removal from their homelands to new land west of the Mississippi River.

**Treaty of New Echota**- also called the Ocoee Steal, signed in 1835, ceded Cherokee land in the Southeast in exchange for compensation. It was not approved by the Cherokee National Council or signed by Principal Chief John Ross.

**Indian Territory**- tracts of land set aside in the west by the government of the United States for the relocation of Native Americans from their ancestral homelands.

**Reconstruction**- the period following the Civil War, lasting until 1877, focused on rebuilding the country after the war and transforming the former Confederate States to fit in with the rest of the Union.

**Civil War**- The Civil War was a war fought between the Northern and Southern United States from 1861-1865. The North was called the Union, and the South was called the Confederacy. The war began after the South seceded from the United States after the election of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States in 1860. The war continued for 4 years, with the eventual defeat of the Confederacy.