

We are Told that the Americans have 13 Councils Compos'd of Chiefs and Warriors: The Chickasaws Send a Message of Conciliation to Congress, 1783

The Chickasaw Indians occupied a key region of northern Mississippi. They held in check the French and Choctaws with their allies and trading partners the British. The American Revolution ended that balance of power. The Chickasaws sought neutrality but also felt allegiance to the British due to their long-held ties. In 1779, the Virginians sent threatening messages warning them of dire consequences if they did not make peace. The Chickasaw chiefs replied in a bold manner. The Mississippi River valley changed significantly when the Spanish replaced the British in West Florida. The Chickasaws found themselves without allies and caught in a competitive crossfire between Spain, the new United States government, and the various new states. The once defiant Chickasaw leaders sought to inaugurate a new relationship with the new United States by sending this message to Congress in the spring of 1783. They desired a halt to encroachments on their land and regular access to supplies in order to appease their belligerent young warriors.

July 28, 1783

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE HONORABLE CONGRESS OF THE
UNITED AMERICAN STATES

Friend & Brother,

This is the first talk we ever sent you-we hope it will not be the last. We desire you to open your Ears to hear, and your heart to understand us, as we shall always be ready to do to your talks, which we expect will be good, as you are a great and wise man.

Brother,

When our great father the King of England called away his warriors, he told us to take your People by the hand as friends and brothers. Our hearts were always inclined to do so & as far as our circumstances permitted us, we evinced our good intentions as Brothers the Virginians can testify-It makes our hearts rejoice to find that our great father, and his children the Americans have at length made peace, which we wish may continue as long as the Sun and Moon, And to find that our Brothers the Americans are inclined to take us by the hand, and Smoke with us at the great Fire, which we hope will never be extinguished.

Brother,

Notwithstanding the Satisfaction all these things give us we are yet in confusion & uncertainty. The Spaniards are sending talks amongst us, and inviting our young Men to trade with them. We also receive talks from the Governor of Georgia to the same effect-We have had Speeches from the Illinois inviting us to a Trade and Intercourse with them-Our Brothers, the Virginians Call upon us to a Treaty, and want part of our land, and we expect our Neighbors who live on Cumberland River, will in a Little time Demand, if not forcibly take part of it from us, also as we

are informed they have been marking Lines through our hunting grounds: we are daily receiving Talks from one Place or other, and from People we Know nothing about. We Know not who to mind or who to neglect. We are told that the Americans have 13 Councils Compos'd of Chiefs and Warriors. We Know not which of them we are to Listen to, or if we are to hear some, and Reject others, we are at a loss to Distinguish those we are to hear. We are told that you are the head Chief of the Grand Council, which is above these 13 Councils: if so why have we not had Talks from you,-We are head men and Chiefs and Warriors also: and have always been accustomed to speak with great Chiefs & warriors-We are Likewise told that you and the Great men of your Council are Very Wise-we are glad to hear it, being assured that you will not do us any Wrong, and therefore we wish to Speak with you and your Council, or if you Do not approve of our so Doing, as you are wise, you will tell us who shall speak with us, in behalf of all our Brothers the Americans, and from whare and whome we are to be supplied with necessaries in the manner our great father supplied us-we hope you will also put a stop to any encroachments on our lands, without our consent, and silence all those People who sends us Such Talks as inflame & exasperate our Young Men, as it is our earnest desire to remain in peace and friendship with our Br: the Americans for ever.

Brother,

The King our Common father always left one of his beloved Men among us, to whom we told anything we had to say, and he soon obtained an answer-and by him our great Father, his Chiefs & headmen spoke to us.

Our great father always gave him goods to cover the nakedness of our old men who could not hunt, our women and our children, and he was as one mouth, and one tongue between us, and was beloved of us all. Such a man living among us particularly at this time, would rescue us from the darkness and confusion we are in. By directing us to whom we should speak, and putting us in the right Path that we should not go wrong.

We have desired our Br. Mr. Donne, who brought talks from General Clark, and has been some time among us, to deliver this talk to you, and speak it in our behalf to your Grand Council, that you may know our want, and as you are wise, that you may direct us what to do for the best. He has Promised, at our desire to take it to your great council fire & to bring as your answer, that you may be no more in the dark-beleive what he tells you from us; we have told him all that is in our hearts.

Brothers, we are very poor for necessaries, for Amunition particularly. We can supply ourselves from the Spaniards but we are averse to hold any intercourse with them, as our hearts are always with our Brothers the Americans. We have advised our young men to wait with patience for the answer to this talk, when we rest assured of having supplies, and every thing so regulated that no further confusion may ensue. We wish that this land may never again be stained with the blood of either white or Red men, that piece may last forever and that both our women and children may sit down in safety under their own shade to enjoy without fear or apprehension the Blessing which the good Spirit enriches them with. Brother, we again desire you and your chiefs to Listen to what we say that we shall not have to Repeat it again, and as you are all Wise, you will know what to do.

Done at Chuck-ul-issah our Great Town the 28th Day of July, 1783.

MINGHOMA, PYAMATHAHAW, KUSHTHAPUSHASA, PYAMINGOE of Christhaura,
PYAMINGO of Chuckaferah.

Source: William P. Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and other Manuscripts from January 1, 1752 to December 31, 1784 Preserved in the Capitol at Richmond* (Richmond, VA., 1883), 3:515–17.