

## **TRIBAL ELECTIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE CHICKASAW NATION**

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This is a preliminary study of the Chickasaw Nation's tribal elections for the legislature and governor in 1990. An important historical issue has been the controversy between the legislative branch and the executive branch over power within the nation. The focus here is whether this controversy had a significant impact on modern tribal elections

**Despite increased research** into race and ethnicity since the 1960s, little is known of the electoral behavior of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States other than African-Americans and Hispanics. The unique legal and social status of Indian tribes makes most of the current political science literature regarding minority electoral patterns inapplicable to Oklahoma's largest minority groups, Native Americans. Nor can Native American tribal elections be treated as a homogeneous whole. Each of the over 250 recognized tribes in the United States has a unique historical form of tribal government. One type of Native American election unique to Oklahoma is that of non-reservation tribal elections. The Chickasaw Nation was chosen for study because it is a non-reservation tribe and because research findings for this tribe may be generalizable to the other Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole).

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The original Chickasaw Nation encompassed the western one-third of what is now the State of Tennessee and a large portion of what is now the State of Mississippi (Bond 1937). The Chickasaw Nation population at first contact with Europeans (in 1540, when Hernando DeSoto attempted to move into the Nation's territory) was probably 3500 to 4500. This Chickasaw Nation had a strong warrior tradition and a propensity for war (Gibson 1971). The present governor of the Chickasaw, Bill Anoatubby, calls the Chickasaws the "unconquered and the unconquerable."

The original tribal government was an extension of the clan system. The Nation's clans and towns were self-governing. Tribal officials held their positions because of clan status. Each clan was governed by a council of elders and a clan Minko (chief) was selected by the council. At the head of tribal government was the High Minko, the principal chief, who was selected from the ranking clan of the Imosaktca (Gibson 1991). The next position was reserved for the war chief known as "first beloved warrior" (Martini 1986).

After the Chickasaw contact with DeSoto, in 1540, another 150 years passed before the tribe had contact with Europeans again. Beginning in the 1700s the Chickasaws formed an alliance with the British. Based originally on trade, the alliance only lasted until the American Revolution, but had a significant and lasting effect on both Chickasaw government and culture (Gibson 1971). As a result of this alliance with the British, the Chickasaw adopted Anglo social and political norms. By 1763, the Chickasaws began to pattern their government structure on that of the British, even changing the title of the leader from High Minko to the British title of "governor" (James 1992).

Having supported the British in the American Revolution, the Chickasaw Nation found they were in no position to bargain with the newly independent United States. In 1786, the tribe signed a treaty with the United States which began a 51-year pattern of relinquishment of most of the land of the Chickasaw Nation to the United States (20 million acres of tribal lands were ceded). The states of Mississippi and Alabama, in which the tribe lived in the early 1800s, were determined to grab the remaining tribal lands and to eliminate tribal government (O'Brien 1989). In 1830, the Indian Removal Act was passed by the U. S. Congress ordering the removal of the Five Civilized Tribes to lands located in the west. In 1837, a treaty was signed between the Chickasaw Nation and the United States relocating the Chickasaws with the Choctaws, the tribe's hereditary enemy (Kappler 1975). By 1853, the Chickasaws were removed to the Indian Territory (what is now southeastern Oklahoma).

Traditional Chickasaw government, already significantly weakened by the Chickasaw's century of contact with the British and the tribe's attempt to adapt to Anglo culture, was almost totally destroyed by removal to the Indian Territory. The blood clan form of tribal government could not adapt to these changing circumstances and disappeared. A pattern of mixed-blood families controlling Chickasaw politics emerged, which exists to this day. During this period, the mixed-bloods supported the owning of slaves and developed a plantation economy in the Indian Territory. They consequently dragged the Chickasaw into the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. The defeat of the Confederacy once again imperiled the Chickasaw Nation. The Nation was forced to sign a new treaty

with the United States in 1866 and required to write a new constitution. The new constitution, ratified in 1868, modeled tribal government on the U. S. constitutional model, separating tribal government into 3 branches. After the Civil War, Anglo incursion into the Indian Territory increased and in 1887 the U. S. Congress passed the General Allotment Act parcelling out tribal lands to individual Indians. The Act was expanded to cover the Five Civilized Tribes in 1893.

The Chickasaw Nation realized that they would have to negotiate with the federal government to assure the best possible terms for allotment and in 1898 signed an agreement for allotment. The 1898 agreement was rejected by the Chickasaw people. The issue of allotment became moot when the U. S. Congress enacted the Curtis Act of 1898 terminating all tribal governments. The Chickasaw government was scheduled for termination on March 4, 1906. The Chickasaw Nation asked the U. S. Congress to permit tribal leaders to remain in office "until tribal business was completed" (Chickasaw National Collection). The termination of the tribe was temporarily suspended and the "present tribal government" was extended (Chickasaw National Collection). This congressional resolution reserved the right to appoint the Chickasaw governor to the President of the United States (Deloria 1988). Presidents continued to do so until 1971. Only three governors, Johnston, Maytubby, and James held the office from 1908 to 1971.

The 1970s saw a change in national government policy toward the Indians and a commitment to allow the nations more self-determination. In 1970, Public Law 91-495 was adopted to permit Indian nations the right to vote for tribal officials once again (Deloria 1988). In 1971, Overton James was elected governor of the Chickasaws in the first tribal election held since the turn of the century. All did not remain well for the Chickasaw Nation after the election of 1971. Upon the renewal of tribal government, friction developed between the tribal legislature and the governor over the authority to appropriate money and initiate legislation.

The Chickasaw Nation sued the U. S. Department of Interior, U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Governor of the Chickasaw Nation in *Morris v. Watt* (1981). At issue was the authority of the governor under the 1868 Chickasaw Constitution. The plaintiffs objected to the relationship that had developed over the years between the governor and the U. S. government. Many Chickasaws felt that the governor had overstepped his constitutional authority and usurped the authority of the tribal legislature. The Supreme Court held that the 1868 Chickasaw Constitution had not been repudiated by any federal acts and ruled that a referendum was to be held to devise a new constitution for the Nation. A new Chickasaw constitution was ratified in 1987.

Chickasaw governors had usurped legislative powers as a result of tribal termination in 1906. The governor's position as the official head of the Chickasaw Nation and, until 1971, his appointment by the President of the United States effectively altered the 1868 Constitution in interpretation and intent. *Morris v. Watt* corrected these usurpations of legislative power by the governors. That is not to say that friction between the two branches ceased. Conflict between the executive and legislative branches continue. In 1991, members of the legislature brought suit against the governor (Chickasaw Tribal Court 1991, Case 9105) challenging whether the governor has the constitutional power to censure members of the tribal legislature. The case is still pending.

This brief review of the history of the Chickasaw government delineates two points. There is a continuing conflict between the executive and legislative branches, which began with the adoption of the British governor concept of government by the tribe in the 1700s and continues to influence tribal politics today. There is also the exacerbation of this issue as a result of the tribal governor being appointed by the President of the United States for 63 years.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

A set of pre- and post-election survey questions were developed for the officials of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Chickasaw government and for a random sample of Chickasaw voters. Prior to the August 1991 Chickasaw tribal elections, all of the candidates for governor of the Chickasaw Nation and all members of the Chickasaw tribal legislature and judiciary were sent questionnaires. The two candidates for governor agreed to participate in the pre-election study as did 10 of the 13 tribal legislators (two of the 13 seats were vacant in 1991) and 2 of the 3 members of the tribal judiciary (1 of 3 positions was vacant in 1991). This was a 92 percent response rate among Chickasaw elected officials. After the August 1991 elections a post election survey of tribal officers was conducted. The governor, one of three tribal judges, and 9 of 13 legislators participated (62% response rate).

### BARRIERS TO RESEARCH

The Governor of the Chickasaws informed us that we would not be allowed access to voter registration lists of Chickasaw tribal members claiming that "tribal law prohibited giving out registered voter lists to anyone other than

candidates running for tribal offices.” Without voter registration lists, we were unable to gain access to members of the Chickasaw Nation who were legally entitled to participate in tribal elections. He informed us that to gain access to vote lists would require the Chickasaw Legislature to pass a bill to that affect. He thought it was unlikely that anyone would be given permission to use the lists, even for purposes of research. The Chickasaw Nation had adopted a policy of “no access” so that voter lists could not be sold to commercial interests (James 1992). Only Chickasaws with Certificates of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB cards) are allowed to vote. In 1991 there were 8,330 Chickasaws with CDIB cards. Fifty-five percent of these voters lived outside the Chickasaw Nation and were unreachable without voter lists.

Since all voting in the Chickasaw Nation is done by mail, exit polling was not a possibility. We finally decided to conduct a small, nonrandom survey of Chickasaws attending community dinners and meetings. Fifty Chickasaws were surveyed prior to the August 1991 elections.

## PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

### THE CHICKASAW VOTER

When the two candidates for governor, Anoatubby and Keel, were asked to profile a typical Chickasaw voter their major disagreement was over whether more in-Nation or out-of-Nation tribal members voted and the relative impact of these two groups on tribal elections. Governor Anoatubby believed that out-of-Nation members are more likely to vote and have the most significant impact on elections while Mr. Keel thought it was in-Nation voters who have the most impact. Over 60 percent of the members of the legislative and judicial branches surveyed agreed that out-of-Nation voters have a significant impact on all tribal elections. They thought the impact of out-of-Nation voters was negative in that these voters have little knowledge of either candidates or issues.

In 1983, the Chickasaw Constitution gave out-of-Nation voters the right to affiliate with any district in the Nation and to vote in tribal elections. The members of the legislative and judiciary thought that if the Nation stopped using mail-in ballots and, instead, used polling places that this would remove the undue influences of out-of-Nation voters. They said it is most unlikely the Nation will change to voting at the polls because the Nation receives money from the federal government for these out-of-Nation members, as long as they are given tribal privileges in the Nation.

The views of the two candidates for governor on this issue had a critical effect on their campaigns. Governor Anoatubby had a mail campaign aimed at out-of-Nation voters and made a number of out-of-Nation visits to these voters (to Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio, Texas, and to California). Mr. Keel's campaign concentrated on in-Nation voters. Governor Anoatubby's belief that out-of-Nation voters have a significant impact on tribal elections may have been correct since he won reelection. However, since the Nation does no post-election voter analysis, it was impossible to ascertain whether out-of-Nation or in-Nation voters had the most influence on the 1991 elections.

Both the candidates for governor and other elected officials thought personal contacts with voters were the only way to win an election in the Nation. Of the potential voters queried, 46 percent identified "word-of-mouth" as the way they received information concerning the campaigns. However, 49 percent said they relied on newspapers for campaign information, specifically *The Chickasaw Times*. Since out-of-Nation voters are also predominantly dependent on written campaign material (they also receive *The Chickasaw Times*), candidates may be overemphasizing the importance of personal contacts.

Of the voters questioned, over 51 percent did not know enough about the candidate for governor, Mr. Keel, to respond to questions concerning his candidacy for governor. The majority of elected tribal officials surveyed were unable to respond to Mr. Keel's candidacy. Those who did respond thought he lacked potential for leadership and was a "trouble-maker." The elected officials felt that Keel had neither the leadership ability needed nor ability to implement his ideas if he became governor.

The majority of the voters surveyed thought Governor Anoatubby was smart, a strong leader, and was able to work well on the state and federal levels. The majority of elected officials surveyed identified similar traits for Anoatubby – his effectiveness in his first term, political experience, and good relations on the state and federal levels. These are many of the same traits Governor Anoatubby identified as being important to the voter; that is, leadership ability and experience in tribal government. It seems clear that Mr. Keel's candidacy had three major drawbacks: his lack of name identification, his negative campaign, and his inability to overcome the advantages of the sitting governor's incumbency (name identification, political experience, track record).

## TRIBAL ISSUES

Table 1 identifies the issues the tribal legislative and judiciary voters and the two candidates for governor regarded as being most important to the

Chickasaw Nation. Governor Anoatubby's agenda appears to be closer to that of the voters than is Mr. Keel's. Both the voters (63%) and elected tribal officials (63%) felt Governor Anoatubby would be able to handle these issues better than would Mr. Keel. Mr. Keel, who resigned from the legislature to run for governor, has an agenda more similar to that of his legislative colleagues than to the agenda of the voters. Since all elected officials run at large in the Chickasaw elections, the differences in agenda cannot be as a result of the governor representing all the people and each legislator representing a specific district. The

TABLE 1

## PRE-ELECTION TRIBAL AGENDAS

<i>Voters Poll</i>	<i>Legislative and Judicial</i>	<i>Anoatubby</i>	<i>Keel</i>
1. education (34%)	1. economic development (42%)	1. social services services	1. jobs/economic development
2. health care (23%)	2. health care (25%)	2. economic development	2. health care
3. economic development (17%)	2. education (25%)	3. tribal culture	3. education
4. the elderly (14%)	4. the elderly (17%)	4. conflict in tribal government/ quality of tribal government	4. the elderly
5. conflict in tribal government (11%)	4. tribal self sufficiency (17%)		5. conflict in tribal government

Source: Author's calculations from survey and interviews

legislative and judicial respondents were the only group surveyed who did not mention the conflict between the branches of tribal government as an important tribal issue.

Governor Anoatubby had been interviewed for a study of tribal leaders' political agendas in 1989 (McCoy 1990), and his agenda in 1989 and 1991 were compared. In the earlier study Governor Anoatubby had ranked the issue of economic development first and had not ranked tribal culture or tribal government at all. When asked why his agenda had changed, he replied that it had changed as a result of experience in office and political maturity. The Governor thought the Chickasaw Nation had made progress in the area of general economic development but the Nation now needed to concentrate more on each individual tribal member becoming more self-sufficient and less dependent on the tribal health, education, and housing programs. Anoatubby said he had also come to realize there was a close connection between tribal culture and tribal government. He thought that if the Chickasaw Nation lost its history and culture that there would be no viable future for the Nation.

One of the economic enterprises Governor Anoatubby supported during his first term was the development of tribal bingo establishments. Eighty percent of the voters supported the tribe's bingo enterprises, although the respondents "damned bingo with faint praise." The voters thought the tribe might as well make money off bingo (they thought it was quite profitable) while it could. None of these respondents thought bingo was a long-term economic solution for the tribe nor believed that the state and federal governments would allow tribal bingo enterprises to remain profitable or even to survive for very long. Seventy-five percent of the legislative and judicial respondents supported the tribe's bingo enterprises but a majority had mixed feelings about the enterprise. Some of the responses were that they opposed it personally but thought it did bring needed money into the tribe; that bingo was not a long-term solution to the tribe's economic problems; and that they thought the bingo enterprises would eventually be phased out because of pressure from the states and federal government

#### TRIBAL CULTURE AND HISTORY

Sixty-seven percent of the members of the legislature and judiciary surveyed thought tribal culture and history did affect voting in modern tribal elections. They thought it had more effect on the less educated tribal members living in rural areas of the Nation. The 33 percent of the respondents who thought tribal culture and history had no effect on modern tribal elections said there was not enough tribal culture left to have an effect and that it was the Anglo culture

which most influenced modern tribal elections. Neither candidate for governor thought tribal culture and history had a significant effect on modern tribal election. Governor Anoatubby did say that he thought that if the Chickasaw heritage was restored, tribal culture and heritage would begin to play a more decisive role in tribal elections.

#### KINSHIP PATTERNS

The legislative and judicial respondents thought kinship patterns did have an effect on modern tribal elections (67%). They thought kinship had more effect on voting for members of the legislature than for governor. They also stated that certain families have historically dominated Chickasaw politics, for example, the Kemps, Colberts, Loves and Carters. Governor Anoatubby did not see kinship patterns as affecting modern tribal elections but Mr. Keel disagreed. He stated that tribal history shows that certain families have historically been elected as tribal leaders.

#### CONFLICT BETWEEN LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES

Sixty percent of the legislative and judicial respondents thought there was serious conflict between the legislative and executive branches of tribal government. These respondents believed that the tribal legislature should be equal in power to the governor. Some of the reasons given for the present lack of legislative power were because so many legislative candidates run unopposed; because tribal legislators are "part-time legislators;" and because Chickasaw voters are much less interested in, and knowledgeable about, legislative races than the governor's race.

Other respondents thought the Chickasaw Constitution grants equal power to the legislature but that the legislature does not know how to exercise its power effectively. These respondents stated that the conflict between the two branches worsened in 1991 when the death of a legislator caused a 6-6 stalemate with six legislators supporting Governor Anoatubby and six supporting Legislator Keel.

Mr. Keel stated in his interview that this conflict was one of the major reasons he decided to run for governor. He believed that many Chickasaw leaders have been the enemies of their people rather than the federal government. He spoke of Governor Anoatubby attempting to censure members of the legislature on two different occasions. Mr. Keel thought the Nation needed a stronger tribal court which would stand up to the Governor instead of "rubber stamping his decisions."

## POST ELECTION SURVEY

## The Tribal Agenda

The tribal legislators and justices were asked to identify the issues most important to Chickasaw voters in the August 1991 elections. A comparison of the pre- and post-responses of the two branches is shown in Table 2.

The most important difference between these two agendas is the addition of the conflict between the executive and legislative branches of tribal government as an issue. Three of the six legislators who opposed Governor Anoatubby and ran for reelection lost their bids. The new legislators ran on "reform" tickets saying that tribal members were "fed up with the fight between the governor and the legislature." Respondents also stated that the judicial branch had been dragged into the controversy because of the suit brought against the governor challenging whether he had the constitutional right to censure members of the legislature (Chickasaw Tribal Court 1991, Case 9105). Governor Anoatubby also changed the order of the issues he thought were most important. After the election, Governor Anoatubby moved the issue of conflict in tribal government from a fourth place ranking to first in importance.

**TABLE 2**  
**AGENDA IDENTIFIED BY LEGISLATIVE**  
**AND JUDICIAL RESPONDENT**

<i>Pre-Election Voter Issues</i>	<i>Post-Election Voter Issues</i>
1. Economic development (42%)	1. Economic development (40%)
2. Health care (25%)	1. Education (40%)
2. Education (25%)	1. Tribal government (40%)
4. The elderly (17%)	4. Health care (30%)
4. Tribal self-sufficiency (17%)	4. The elderly (30%)

Source: See Table 1

Asked for their personal agendas for their term in office, the tribal legislators continued to identify economic development as the most important issue (56%) with social services (44%) a close second. The judicial respondent identified his personal agenda as the development of a comprehensive tribal code, strengthening the position of the judiciary and promoting the balance of power among the three branches of tribal government.

### Campaigning

When asked why those elected to the legislature in 1991 won rather than their opponents, legislative respondents stated that it was personal characteristics rather than issues which helped elect them to office (90%). The traits they believed to be important to voters were character and reputation, honesty, and expertise and knowledge. The judicial member also identified character (honesty, responsibility) as the reason he was elected. Both the judicial member and a number of legislators also mentioned that they thought their opponents had run "negative campaigns." Governor Anoatubby responded that he won over his opponent because he had a plan to present to the people and Mr. Keel did not. He also said he was more qualified and had more experience than his opponent. He stated that, of course, incumbency was an advantage to him. However, he thought a qualified challenger with an alternative program to present to the tribe could overcome the incumbency advantage. He also stated that he thought there were historical patterns in the Chickasaw culture which encouraged tribal members to be loyal to the tribal leader and not to change leaders as long as the leader is doing an adequate job. Anoatubby thought the tribe would throw out a scoundrel as tribal leader but would not throw out a leader just because he had made mistakes. Past Governor Overton James (James 1992) stated that the advantages of incumbency in the Nation's elections require a challenger to have name recognition and his own political record. James stated that Anoatubby had name recognition and experience in office (eight years as lieutenant governor) before he ran for governor the first time.

The legislative and judicial respondents thought Anoatubby defeated Keel because of the advantage of incumbency (90%), but emphasized that incumbency cannot overcome the record of a tribal leader who is doing a bad job. These respondents also stated that Keel was not a serious candidate in that he had run for governor in 1987 and had won only 10 percent of the vote. In the 1991 election he won 23 percent of the vote. They criticized Mr. Keel for his lack of an agenda, his lack of leadership qualities, and the fact that he ran against the present governor rather than for the office itself.

### Conflict in Tribal Government

Governor Anoatubby thought that this issue had a significant effect on his winning reelection and on the defeat of members of the legislative faction who had opposed him. Sixty percent of the legislative and judicial respondents thought this conflict in government did affect the 1991 elections. They thought it had more effect on in-Nation voters than out-of-Nation voters since out-of-Nation voters are not very aware of tribal politics. Generally, the officials thought the voters were fed up with the conflict and were sending a message that the three branches of tribal government should communicate with each other and learn to work together. The legislative respondents thought the conflict had a more significant effect on the governor's race than on their own. When asked if relations between the governor and legislature had improved after the 1991 elections, the governor stated that relations were better but that some animosity still remained. The legislative and judicial respondents (80%) thought relations were much better and improving following the 1991 elections.

Governor Anoatubby emphasized that Chickasaw tribal government, just as many other tribal governments, is still in an evolutionary process. He is presently working on a tribal code which was to be in draft form by March 1992. At that time, he hoped the legislature would take an active role in helping develop the code. He stated that the legislature had never known its proper role and he thought this codification would help the legislature define its role. He thought that it had never been clear that it is the role of the legislature to create law while it is the role of the executive to implement the laws.

### Differences Between Tribal and Anglo Elections

Eighty percent of the legislative and judicial respondents thought there were important differences in tribal and Anglo elections. They spoke of the effect of out-of-Nation voters on campaigning in tribal elections. They spoke of the difficulties in campaigning when the voters (Chickasaws) are a population within the larger Anglo population. They stated that this makes media campaigns almost useless and forced reliance on personal contact between candidate and voter (in-Nation) or mail-outs (out-of-Nation).

## CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

The Chickasaw Nation has a long history of attempting to assimilate into Anglo culture (both the British culture and American culture). This move toward assimilation encouraged the ascendancy of the mixed bloods into tribal leadership and dominance, which prevailed after the tribe's removal to the Indian Territory. The termination of the tribe and its reformation with the governor appointed by the U. S. President for 64 years further tied the Nation to the federal government and Anglo culture. The fact that the Chickasaw Nation has no contiguous land base (no reservation) means that the Chickasaws must live among the Anglo population and this has also had a significant effect on both tribal culture and politics.

The past governor of the Chickasaws, Overton James, stated that the advancement of the Chickasaw Nation is a direct result of the Nation knowing how to get things done in Washington, D.C., and Oklahoma City. He said many of the Nation's accomplishments are a result of Chickasaw leaders' rapport with state and federal officials and agencies (James 1992). However, there is a negative side to tribal assimilation into the Anglo culture. Many western tribes do not consider Chickasaws "real Indians" (James 1992), lessening the influence of the Chickasaw Nation in national tribal politics. This assimilation into Anglo culture has also resulted in the potential loss of the Chickasaw culture. This erosion of tribal culture is one of the major reasons Governor Anoatubby has made the restoration of tribal culture one of his primary issues in 1992.

It is clear that the political history of the Chickasaw Nation (the governor appointed by the president for the past 64 years, conflicting tribal constitutions, court cases pitting members of the tribal government against each other) has encouraged and exacerbated the conflict between the executive and legislative branches of tribal government. This conflict has worked to the detriment of the tribe in that it has deflected attention from tribal problems and issues to infighting between the two branches. This factionalism has also had a significant effect on some tribal elections in that the issue of legislative-executive conflict has been the deciding factor in elections rather than choosing the best candidate for the job. This conflict has probably also increased the amount of negative campaigning and personal attacks in tribal elections.

It also seems clear that tribal culture and history affect campaigning in Chickasaw tribal elections. The most important finding in this study may be the potential impact of out-of-Nation voters on tribal elections, their effect on campaigning and on who is elected to tribal office. An in-depth study of in-Nation voters versus out-of-Nation voters is recommended. Another interesting find of this study was the possibility that clan and kinship patterns may still have an

effect on some tribal voting patterns (depending on the voter's education level, rural or urban, in-Nation or out-of-Nation). An in-depth study of the Chickasaw voter is also recommended.

There is a serious barrier to either of these studies being initiated. Article III, Section I, of the Election Rules and Regulations of the Chickasaw Nation (1986) deny access to anyone, other than official candidates for tribal office, to tribal voter lists. The Chickasaw government and tribal members do not want tribal member lists to be accessible to businesses and they also believe that unauthorized use of the lists invades the privacy of tribal members. Compounding this problem is that in January 1991 there was an unauthorized survey of Chickasaw voters by a university researcher. The Nation notified the individual to cease and desist and he did so. If voter research is to be done in the Chickasaw Nation, the research would have to be a joint venture between the Nation and the researcher. This would allow the Nation to control access to tribal members while still allowing the data needed for the research to be collected. As serious as the barriers to research of tribal elections may be, the need for such research in Oklahoma is unquestioned if we are to understand the electoral behavior of this important minority political group.

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