

# The Choctaw-Irish Story



TRAIL OF TEARS



FAMINE



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In 1847, during the Great Famine in Ireland, the Choctaw Nation – despite having recently endured the devastation of the Trail of Tears – raised funds to support people they had never met across the Atlantic. Their generosity, offered in the shadow of their own suffering after forced removal from Mississippi to Oklahoma, forged a bond that the Irish have never forgotten. Today, the Choctaw-Irish relationship stands as a testament to solidarity, compassion, and mutual respect between nations.

The artwork reflects this enduring connection by weaving together references to past and present. Imagery on the left recalls the Choctaw Trail of Tears with symbols including those found in Choctaw pottery and shell carvings. On the right the images evoke the Irish Famine and the answered pleas for aid. The spirals and diamonds draw from Neolithic tombs such as Newgrange and later Celtic art.

At the centre, both women wear traditional dress, and the children hold stuffed animals as symbols of comfort. The Irish woman's clothing is inspired by nineteenth-century rural dress from the west of Ireland, and she wears a St Brigid's Cross in honour of one of Ireland's patron saints. Diamonds on the Choctaw woman's clothing represent the eastern diamondback rattlesnake, which the Choctaw respect for attacking only when threatened, while the triangles on the boy's clothing represent the hills and valleys of the Choctaw homelands.

At the top there are intertwined references to the sculptures Kindred Spirits in Midleton, Co. Cork, Ireland and Eternal Heart in Tuskahoma, Oklahoma, USA which honour the transatlantic friendship.

*Created by Choctaw artist Laura Huskey and Irish artist Jack O'Brien, the work forms part of the Sharing Lands: Reconciliation, Recognition & Reciprocity project, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.*



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