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Review of *Indian Tribes of Oklahoma: A Guide* by Blue Clark

Ron McCoy  
*Oklahoma State University*

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Oklahoma's license plates, which formerly displayed an Osage shield, now depict a representation of Native son Allan Houser's evocative sculpture of a fellow Apache preparing to fire an arrow at the sky. The legend running across the bottom of the plate reads: "Native America." This is an apt statement about Oklahoma, site of pre-Columbian Indian settlements, westernmost extension of Mississippian mound building cultures, home for Kiowa and Comanche buffalo hunters, and adopted land of Cherokees and others forced to abandon familiar stomping grounds east of the Mississippi River. On a per capita basis, Oklahoma boasts the nation's largest Native American population.

For years Muriel Wright's A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma (1951) served as the go-to source for easily accessible snapshot histories of the state's more than forty Native American tribes. But the passage of time highlighted the need for a similar, albeit more contemporary, resource. Blue Clark, professor of history and law at Oklahoma City University, addresses this need.

Wright's role in creating the template Clark follows is not acknowledged, but her influence permeates Indian Tribes of Oklahoma: A Guide. Like Wright, Clark gives each tribe its own chapter, within which information is grouped into sections dealing with such topics as language, background, location, population, history, and lore. He also includes information not available to Wright and updates tribal profiles with data on casinos and other business enterprises. As a result, this is the first place to go if you're looking for information about tribes ranging from the Alabama-Quassarte to the Yuchi (Euchee) and those in between.

Unfortunately, factoids and misimpressions require readers to approach this book with a sense of caution akin to that exhibited by a soldier entering booby-trapped territory. For example, taking the
text at face value, one might erroneously conclude pre-Columbian Native American-African-Asian contacts are well established; that Dull Knife and Morning Star were two different Cheyenne leaders, not two names for the same man; or that all twenty Cherokee signers of the Treaty of 1835 were killed by embittered fellow tribesmen; while the unwary might accept the undocumented presence of Texas gunslinger John Wesley Hardin at the Second Battle of Adobe Walls during the Red River War of 1874–1875.

As conceptually sound and richly detailed as *Indian Tribes of Oklahoma* is, it could have been and should have been a much better book.

**RON MCCOY**
Department of History
Oklahoma State University