

# Wilma Mankiller – First Female Principal Chief of Cherokee Nation

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grades 6 - 12  
Suggested Duration: 2 class periods.

Wilma Mankiller - Native American activist, social worker, community developer and the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.



## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

- (1) The civics and government content standards for sixth through eighth grade are that each student will:
- (e) identify events and leaders that ensure that key United States principles of equality and civil rights are applied to various groups, including American Indians.
- (1) The civics and government content standards for ninth through twelfth grade are that each student will:
- (e) evaluate how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international levels.

### Understandings

- American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. (Essential Understanding 7)
- Wilma Mankiller was an exemplar of American Indian leadership for the Cherokee Nation, and she applied Cherokee sovereignty for the benefit of her people.

### Essential Questions

- What is the significance of Mankiller's lifework?
- What is leadership?
- How do we evaluate examples of effective leadership?
- How can we practice leadership?



Students will be able to...

- analyze and discuss how Wilma Mankiller worked to address change for Cherokee people and how her work impacted other American Indian communities.

Students will know...

- Wilma Mankiller was the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and she has made a profound and significant impact during her lifetime.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Students will utilize various sources to gather background information about Wilma Mankiller.
2. Students will have share what they have learned via various assignments such as a short reaction paper, poem, song, artwork, etc. Allow for creativity with the assessment.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities:

This lesson plan is based upon an educational resource developed by The National Women's History Museum.

To begin the lesson, use a quarter (or several quarters) and share it with the class. Ask who is on the back and why. Ideally, you would want an actual quarter with Wilma Mankiller. If not available, use the image from the U.S. Mint. The Wilma Mankiller Quarter is the third coin in the American Women Quarters Program.

The American Women Quarters Program is a four-year program that celebrates the accomplishments and contributions made by women of the United States.

The American Women Quarters feature contributions from a variety of fields, including, but not limited to, suffrage, civil rights, abolition, government, humanities, science, space, and the arts. The women honored are from ethnically, racially, and geographically diverse backgrounds.

Display the listing of women featured on the quarters and facilitate a brief class discussion about the women. Do you recognize any of them? What is their significance and contribution to our country?

Transition the discussion to Wilma Mankiller and display the quarter with her image. Ask students to describe what they see?

Share the following questions with the students. They will be able to discuss and answer these questions by the end of the lesson. Who is Wilma Mankiller? How did her life experiences lead her to a sense of purpose and vision for her life's work? What life experiences have you had that have made you passionate about something? Do we have an obligation to work toward

positive change? Do you see yourself as an advocate? Who benefits from your advocacy? Do you have agency and the capacity for leadership?

Utilize the instructional strategies and resources from the Wilma Mankiller lesson plan developed by the National Women's History Museum. A link to the lesson is included in the Materials/Resource section. The lesson plan includes a short biography, video, and primary source document. The lesson plan takes approximately two - 45-minute class periods.

### Materials/Resources Needed

[Wilma Mankiller lesson plan developed by the National Women's History Museum](#)

[Lesson plan from the National Native American Hall of Fame](#) Wilma Mankiller was inducted in the Hall of Fame in 2018.

[Wilma Mankiller biography from the National Native American Hall of Fame](#)

[The Life of Wilma Mankiller, First Woman to Serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation](#) Interactive resource guide with background information about Wilma Mankiller.

[United States Mint – Wilma Mankiller Quarter](#)

[American Women Quarters Program](#)