

Leadership in Cinema



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

WE SHALL REMAIN – EPISODE 3, TRAIL OF TEARS

(Inspired by real life events)

Submitted by: Pam McDonald E-mail: pmcdonal@blm.gov
Phone: 208-387-5318
Studio: American Experience (PBS) Released: 2009
Directors: Chris Eyre
Genre: Documentary Audience Rating: Not rated
Runtime: 81 minutes

Materials

[Leading in the Wildland Fire Service](#), [Incident Response Pocket Guide](#) (IRPG), Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles, notepads, and writing utensils.

Objective

The objective of this lesson is for students to watch We Shall Remain - Episode 3: Trail of Tears and discuss the Cherokee tribe's obstacles assimilating into American society.

Basic Plot

Episode 3: Trail of Tears is the third documentary in a five-part mini-series devoted to Native history and the leaders that shaped American history. Episode 3 focuses on the leadership of five Cherokee leaders—Major Ridge, John Ridge, John Ross, Elias Boudinot, and Sequoyah—and President Andrew Jackson. The central themes of this film are an apparent lack of cohesion and facing ethical dilemmas.

Main Characters

Wes Studi Major Ridge
Wesley French John Ridge
Will Finley Elias Boudinot
Freddy Douglas John Ross

Facilitation Tips

1. Organize a group of students to participate in the We Shall Remain - Episode 3: Trail of Tears discussion.
2. Have students watch individually or as a group We Shall Remain - Episode 3: Trail of Tears.
3. Conduct a guided discussion (handout and possible comments provided). Have students discuss their findings and how they will apply leadership lessons learned to their role in wildland fire suppression. Facilitate discussion in groups that have difficulty.
4. Note: The discussion questions are only a guide. Facilitators have latitude to select questions that meet timeframes and local objectives or develop questions of their own.

References

Facilitators are encouraged to review the links below in order to obtain information that may be helpful during group/classroom discussions and for continued leadership development.

- [The Civil War Curriculum](#)
- Logan, Charles Russell. "[The Promised Land: The Cherokees, Arkansas, and Removal, 1794-1839.](#)"
- Meserve, John Bartlett. "[Chronicles of Oklahoma – Chief John Ross.](#)" Volume 13, No. 4., December, 1935.
- Rosser, Ezra. "[The Nature of Representation: The Cherokee Right to a Congressional Delegate.](#)" Boston University Public Interest Law Journal, Vol. 15, No. 91, Fall 2005.
- Western Carolina University. [Cherokee Phoenix.](#)

Hyperlinks have been included to facilitate the use of the [Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program website](#). Encourage students of leadership to visit the [website](#).

We Shall Remain - Episode 3: Trail of Tears

Guided Discussion – Possible Answers

1. As leader, what did the Ridge want for the Cherokee people?
 - “In the long struggle between Indians and Americans, few native leaders clung to the hope of peaceful coexistence longer. Few others invested more in the professed protections of the American legal system. Few set more stock in the promises of the American government and its constitution. By 1830, the Ridge had already struck a series of hard bargains with the United States. In return for the safety and security of the Cherokee people—and the right to remain on the land of their forefathers—the Ridge had taken pains to shed the life he had been raised to.” (0:21-1:10)
2. Major Ridge and General (and later President) Andrew Jackson and their troops/warriors were allies during the Creek and Seminole Wars. What influence did this alliance have in later years? Respectfully discuss in your groups an experience you have had where an alliance either disappointed you or proved to be beneficial when accomplishing a mission.
 - Answers will vary. However, students may agree that this alliance had little effect on the future relationships between the two factions.
 - “As the Georgia legislature began to kick back, other more ominous events were unfolding: the discovery of gold in Cherokee territory, which caused a stampede of white prospectors, and the first stirring of a populist political movement that sent tremors through Indian lands all over the East. This hard-edged new movement found voice in Andrew Jackson, whose ascent to the presidency in 1829 owed to the newly enfranchised Southern frontiersmen. In his first address to Congress, President Jackson announced his intention to do as his voters pleased, which is to say, rid the East of the Indian tribes once and for all. He championed new legislation giving him power to offer the tribes land west of the Mississippi if they would go nicely.” (26:21-27:38)
 - Answers will vary. Facilitators should encourage students speak respectfully when talking of negative experiences.
3. Dutiful leaders develop their subordinates for the future by mentoring and sharing experiences. Give an example of a mentoring relationship from Episode 3. Think back on all those who have helped you throughout your life. Describe your mentor to your group. Explain what made him/her such a good mentor.
 - “John Ross was not from a prominent Cherokee family the way John Ridge was. But Ridge takes John Ross kind of under his wing as a protégé. Here in John Ross he’s got someone who’s only an eighth Cherokee, is very familiar with white society because of his father. Equally adept at negotiating both of those worlds.” (18:17-18:41)

- Answers will vary.
4. What did Sequoyah do to advance the Cherokee people? Why was this advancement so important?
- “Sequoyah was devoted to enabling the Cherokee people to have at their command an essential power that he saw white society have, that being the ability to write in the Cherokee language. Ultimately he did something that no one has ever done and that was create a system of reading and writing in a language when he himself could not read or write in any other language.” (22:22-23:00)
 - Written communication revolutionized Cherokee society.
5. “In high risk environments, the best level of protection against errors and accidents is effective team communication.” (Leading in the Wildland Fire Service, page 50) Who has an obligation to communicate critical information? What are the Five Communication Responsibilities for the wildland firefighter?
- Everyone, regardless of position, has an obligation to communicate critical information.
 - Refer students to [Leading in the Wildland Fire Service, page 51](#). The Five Communication Responsibilities are:
 - Brief.
 - Debrief.
 - Acknowledge and understand messages.
 - Communicate hazards to others.
 - Ask if you don’t know.
6. What events fracture the unity of the Cherokee Nation? How does the United States capitalize on this situation? Respectfully describe a situation to your group where something fractured the unity of a crew/group/unit?
- Answers will vary, but may include:
 - President Andrew Jackson refuses to recognize the Supreme Court’s decision that Cherokee tribal laws could not be written over by the state of Georgia or the sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation.
 - “The Ridges kept saying publicly, ‘if we could if we could just talk to the Cherokee people then we can convince them that this is our only option.’ And they felt like John Ross was being heavy handed in keeping them from speaking as openly as they liked to.” (40:24-40:41)
 - ““The duty of the minority to yield and unite is sanctioned by patriotism and virtue,”” Ross proclaimed. Then, citing a national emergency, he suspended the upcoming tribal elections. (40:41-40:54)

- “When John Ross cancels elections, now there’s a real block to John Ridge ever assuming what he knows to be his rightful position. He sees John Ross as a dictator. And he grows to hate the man in a very visceral way.” (40:54-41:13)
- “The United States and Georgia got the scent of blood, and dug deep at the rift that had opened between Chief Ross and the Ridges. Federal agents kept close contact with members of the Ridge faction, and let it be known among all Cherokees. Ross’s allies fanned rumors that the Ridges were illegally negotiating away Cherokee land, and reminded the Ridge Party that the penalty for selling land without the consent of the tribe was death. By the time the tribal leaders gathered for an emergency session at the Red Clay Council Grounds in the summer of 1834, John Ross had taken aim at his old friend, Major Ridge.” (41:13-41:56)
- Answers will vary. Again, encourage respectful conversation.

7. Major Ridge faces the following ethical dilemma.

“In the last days of 1835, in defiance of Chief Ross and the National Council, a self-appointed group of Cherokee leaders met at the home of Elias Boudinot. In front of them was the newly negotiated Treaty of New Echota. In return for ceding all the tribal lands in the southeast, the Cherokee Nation would be paid five million dollars, providing funds to relocate west of the Mississippi and to build schools, churches and homes in their new land. The treaty party did not stand to benefit financially, but they knew that would be little comfort to their fellow citizens.” (45:43-46:30)

Using the wildland fire ethical dilemma model below, assess the issues that contributed to Major Ridge’s dilemma?



- Crew cohesion:
 - The Cherokee Nation split into the factions— Ross Party and the Ridge Party. The Ross Party felt they had backing from the Supreme Court and should continue to fight for their land. The Ridge Party felt they should “cut their losses” and relocate.
- Agency policy:
 - Selling of tribal land without full consent of the Cherokee Nation was illegal with a penalty of death.
 - Supreme Court decision (Worcester v. Georgia) that “The Cherokee nation is a distinct community, occupying its own territory, with boundaries accurately described, in which the laws of Georgia can have no force, and which the citizens of Georgia have no right to enter but with the assent of the Cherokees themselves.” (Chief Justice John Marshall, 33:44-34:37)
- Individual needs:

Major Ridge had assumed a “civilized” life and had much to lose in terms of land but would not benefit financially.

8. Read “Leader’s Intent” under “Communication Responsibilities” on page ix of the IRPG. What are the three essential components of leader’s intent?
 - Task – What is to be done
 - Purpose – Why it is to be done
 - End state – How it should look when done
9. Read “Leader’s Intent” on pages 33 and 34 of Leading in the Wildland Fire Service. What are the three essential components of leader’s intent?
 - Task – the objective or goal of the assignment.
 - Purpose – why the assignment needs to be done.
 - End state – how the situation should look when the assignment is successfully completed.

Pretend you are Major Ridge. Clearly state your leader’s intent to your subordinates (other group members) with regard to the Treaty of New Echota.

- Answers may vary, but should address the following.
 - Task – “The Ridges believed that what was left of American tolerance for Indian people was evaporating fast. It was time for the Cherokee leaders to take the best cash offer from Washington, and get their people to safety west of the Mississippi.” (45:07-45:43)
 - Purpose – Maintain a strong and sovereign Cherokee nation.
 - End state – A select few Cherokee leaders would sign (illegally) the Treaty of Echota on behalf of an uneducated (in terms of the treaty) Cherokee people. A unified, sovereign Cherokee Nation would rise again west of the Mississippi.

What was the actual end state?

- “Soon after the Treaty of New Echota was ratified in the United States Senate—by a margin of just one vote—Major Ridge and his son John left their homes and moved to the land west of the Mississippi to establish a new Cherokee Nation. The Ridges were going the way of other tribes around them—the Creeks, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws. But less than 2,000 of the 18,000 Cherokee citizens joined the Ridges in their journey west.” (50:00-50:27)
- The Cherokee people must relocate by May 1838.
- John Ross’s attempt to have the narrowly ratified treaty overturned fails.
- Removal begins on May 26, 1838; 4,000 die in the process of relocation.
- Major Ridge, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot are murdered.

DUTY

Be proficient in your job, both technically & as a leader.

- Take charge when in charge.
- Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.
- Develop a plan to accomplish given objectives.

Make sound & timely decisions.

- Maintain situation awareness in order to anticipate needed actions.
- Develop contingencies & consider consequences.
- Improvise within the commander's intent to handle a rapidly changing environment.

Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.

- Issue clear instructions.
- Observe & assess actions in progress without micro-managing.
- Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks & assignments when appropriate.

Develop your subordinates for the future.

- Clearly state expectations.
- Delegate tasks that you are not required to do personally.
- Consider individual skill levels & developmental needs when assigning tasks.

Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.

- Put the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives.
- Take care of your subordinate's needs.
- Resolve conflicts between individuals on the team.

Keep your subordinates informed.

- Provide accurate & timely briefings.
- Give the reason (intent) for assignments & tasks.
- Make yourself available to answer questions at appropriate times.

Build the team.

- Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.
- Recognize accomplishments & reward them appropriately.
- Apply disciplinary measures equally.

Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

- Observe human behavior as well as fire behavior.
- Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.
- Consider team experience, fatigue & physical limitations when accepting assignments.

Know yourself and seek improvement.

- Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character & skill level.
- Ask questions of peers & supervisors.
- Actively listen to feedback from subordinates.

Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.

- Accept full responsibility for & correct poor team performance.
- Credit subordinates for good performance.
- Keep your superiors informed of your actions.

Set the example.

- Share the hazards & hardships with your subordinates.
- Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

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Using the wildland fire ethical dilemma model, assess the issues that contributed to Major Ridge's dilemma?

- Crew cohesion
- Agency policy
- Individual needs

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What was the actual end state?

Leadership Challenge

As part of developing our people for the future, leaders help their people grow by mentoring and sharing experiences. Mentoring them begins their journey from followership to leadership. Episode 3: Trail of Tears briefly discussed the mentoring relationship between Major Ridge and John Ross.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy’s 2009 Mentoring Program Guide, “Mentoring is an effective way to provide professional development and to enhance learning in the workplace. The mentoring relationship is a special relationship built on trust, encouragement, and targeted development. A mentor is a teacher, coach, and advisor who provide guidance and opportunities for learning and professional growth to another employee.”

The Challenge: Become a wildland fire mentor, mentee, or both.

But, my local unit does not have a mentoring program...

Work with other wildland fire leaders in your area/agency to create a mentoring program.

The following mentoring resources may be of value:

- [USCG/Department of Homeland Security Mentoring Program](#)
- [U.S. Department of Energy Mentoring Guidance and Program Plan](#)
- [Office of Personnel Management – Mentoring and Coaching](#)
- [The Mentoring Group](#)

Traditional American Indian Leadership

The following highlights of some of the main features of traditional American Indian leadership:

- Spirituality was a core element of American Indian life and all leadership possessed spiritual significance.
- Leaders demonstrated generosity and kindness, and honored all living things.
- Elders cultivated the leadership of future generations.
- American Indian leaders were humble servants to the community. Individuals did not seek leadership. Leaders emerged from their contributions to the community and the people recognized and selected those considered most able to lead.
- No one person was always a leader and many were leaders at different times.
- The community could cease to recognize leaders by simply choosing to not follow him or her.
- American Indian leaders led by example rather than by authority or command.
- American Indian leaders took their time when making a decision. When they gave their word on a decision it was a final, binding pledge.
- When tribal leaders met to deliberate on a matter they sought understanding and consensus through mutual inquiry. There was no debate.
- American Indian methods of resolving social conflict were based on the concept of restitution that focused on restoring respectful personal and social relations.

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