



Columbus Academy

*Currier Lecture Series
Presents:*

**Wilma
Mankiller**
Chief of the Cherokee Nation

Wednesday, April 30, 1997

7:30 p.m.

Columbus Academy Schoedinger Theatre

The public is invited to this free lecture!

4300 Cherry Bottom Road • Gahanna, Ohio 43230
(614) 475-2311 • www.columbusacademy.org



When Wilma Mankiller was elected Chief of the Cherokee Nation, one man in a university audience suggested she call herself “Chiefette.” “How about Ms. Chievious?” the quick-witted chief responded. Students and faculty members at Harvard University roared at her brilliant retort. She is a speaker known for bringing the house down. And for building her nation up.

Oklahoma has 32 Indian tribes, of which – with 137,000 members – the Cherokee is the largest. While Oklahoma Indian tribes do have their own political structures, some of their members have also become “mainstreamed,” having been elected to the state’s House and Senate. Thus, with Mankiller’s help, the Cherokee Nation has become a productive influence of social, economic and political policy. “Remember,” Oklahoma Governor Henry Bellmon stated, “our most famous citizen, Will Rogers, was a Cherokee.”

Women had once been leaders of Indian tribes. “Contrary to what you’ve read in history books, not all tribes were controlled by men. Progressive and with a tradition of matriarchy in which women chose and educated the young men who would become leaders, the Cherokees lost track of that balance between the sexes when they adopted values of the American culture at large,” Mankiller said.

As Indians became more educated, moved off the reservations or beyond Indian communities, they brought back values of the wider culture. “Our people began to assume a value that was very new: sexism.” Ironically, most of the opposition to Mankiller’s appointment as Chief came from her contemporaries, she said. “Older people were the mainstay of my support. Sometimes I think that’s because they’re old enough to have been brought up to respect women and have respect for women in high places.”

The leader of the Cherokee Nation says that women are becoming more active in tribal leadership in a way that mirrors the movement of all American women into politics. Humorous, witty and a captivating storyteller, Mankiller is an astute observer of the American political scene and has a knack for applying the appropriate anecdote. She is an important advocate for minority rights and women’s issues.

