



## Cherokee Nation

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November 19, 2012

### Gmail now available in Cherokee

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. — Cherokee has become the first Native American language fully integrated into Gmail. That means users can now exchange emails and instant message chats entirely in the Cherokee Syllabary, just as they would in English, Spanish or other languages.

“We are constantly trying to find ways to ensure our Cherokee language lives on and thrives, and being able to converse via email is a vital part of that,” Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker said. “In the 1800s, we were the first tribe to develop a written language and newspaper. Two hundred years later, we continue to be a leader by becoming the first tribal language to be integrated on the iPhone and now Gmail. Partnering with the largest technology companies in the world to translate our native language onto modern devices is another useful tool that helps our Cherokees keep the language alive.”

One of the challenges of fully integrating Cherokee into Gmail was translating more modern words that did not exist when the Cherokee Syllabary was transcribed. Cherokee Nation translators and language technologists worked with Google to translate terms like “inbox” to ᏊᏚᏗᏍᏔᏅ, “sign in” to ᏍᏍᏁᏚᏗᏍᏔᏅ and “spam” to ᏆᏁᏚᏗᏍᏔᏅ.

“When Google decides to support a language, it’s not just about which ones have the largest number of speakers. In order to do business around the world, we need to support

languages with millions of speakers, such as Japanese, French or Arabic,” said Craig Cornelius, a Google software engineer. “But we also want to include less spoken languages in order to help preserve the culture and diversity that come with them.”

Cornelius said several Native American tribes have expressed interest in translating their languages with Google, but the Cherokee Nation has been the most intentional in getting the translations done.

In 2002, a Cherokee Nation survey found no one under 40 spoke conversational Cherokee. A Cherokee language immersion school followed, requiring all the learning materials of an English-speaking school, including technological tools.

“When people are immersed in a language and they want to continue to learn, it’s best that all those tools are expressed in the language they’re learning,” said Joseph Erb, a language technologist for the tribe. “Gmail has given us our first localized way to send emails all in the Cherokee language. It’s not just revitalizing our language, it actually allows us to use it on a daily basis for the most mundane of tasks, like sending emails.”

The Cherokee Nation was the first tribe to make technological advances with other companies as well.

In 2003, Apple added the font “Plantagenet Cherokee” to its MacOS operating system. In 2010 Apple announced that Cherokee had become the first Native language and one of only 40 worldwide languages integrated into the iPhone’s operating system.

In 2011, the tribe partnered with Google to create a Google Web search option in Cherokee and virtual keyboard for typing in the Syllabary. Cherokee is one of 57 languages now offered in Gmail. In February, Microsoft announced on its blog that Windows 8 will be available in 14 new languages, including Cherokee. The Droid cell phone is also expected to soon include Cherokee

as part of its operating system. To visit Google's blog post on the Gmail launch, visit [gmailblog.blogspot.com/2012/11/gmail-get-started-with-gmail-in-chokeee.html](http://gmailblog.blogspot.com/2012/11/gmail-get-started-with-gmail-in-chokeee.html)

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Photo Cutline: Gmail as of Nov. 19 is offered in the Cherokee Syllabary.

### **About Cherokee Nation**

The Cherokee Nation is the federally recognized government of the Cherokee people and has inherent sovereign status recognized by treaty and law. The seat of tribal government is the W.W. Keeler Complex near Tahlequah, Okla., the capital of the Cherokee Nation. With more than 300,000 citizens, over 8,000 employees and a variety of tribal enterprises ranging from aerospace and defense contracts to entertainment venues, Cherokee Nation is one of the largest employers in northeastern Oklahoma and the largest tribal nation in the United States. To learn more, please visit [www.cherokee.org](http://www.cherokee.org).