



San Diego Cherokee Community Newsletter

Issue 5

www.sandiegocherokeecommunity.com

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SDCC Meeting December 9

The next San Diego Cherokee Community meeting is December 9 at 1 p.m. at the Clairemont Community Center. It is located in the Clairemont Town Square, 4731 Clairemont Dr.

This is a pot luck luncheon so everyone please bring a dish to share.



Photo by Mike Ledger

Our program for this meeting will be a video presentation of the 2007 Cherokee Nation Holiday, held September 1-3 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Please mark your calendar, bring family and friends and join us!

Visit the San Diego Cherokee Community website at:

www.sandiegocherokeecommunity.com

for more information and directions.

Boren Amendment Delays Housing Funds Cut

In September, U.S. Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., introduced an amendment to the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2007 to strip the Cherokee Nation of its portion of the funding bill until citizenship rights are granted to Freedmen descendants.

U.S. Dan Boren, D-Okla., prior to that amendment receiving approval on the House floor, attached a second-level amendment to the Watt amendment to delay the cut until the legal cases by Freeman are decided.

Boren's amendment states congressional action should be delayed until the case is decided because some Freedmen have appealed the March 3 Cherokee Nation votes that rescinded their citizenship rights granted in the CN courts. It also states that Congress should not take action because in May, the Cherokee Nation District Court Judge John Cripps issued a temporary injunction requiring

reinstatement of citizenship rights for Freedmen pending the outcome of the case.

Lawmakers approved both the amendment and the original language by voice votes. The combined provisions were attached to the bill to reauthorize a housing program for tribes.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the NAHASDA of 2007 reauthorizes appropriations through the fiscal year 2012 for making of block grants under the NAHASDA of 1996 on behalf of Indian tribes for affordable housing programs.

--Will Chavez, *Cherokee Phoenix*, October 2007

Traditional Cherokee Belief System

In a search for order and sustaining that order, the older Cherokee devised a simple, yet seemingly complex belief system. Many of the elements of the original system remain today. Although some have evolved or otherwise been modified, the traditional Cherokee of today recognize the belief system as an integral part of day-to-day life.

Certain numbers play an important role in the ceremonies of the Cherokee. The numbers four and seven repeatedly occur in myths, stories and ceremonies. Four represents all the familiar forces, also represented in the four cardinal directions. These cardinal directions are east, west, north, and south. Certain colors are also associated with these directions. The number seven represents

the seven clans of the Cherokee, and we are also associated with directions. In addition to the four cardinal directions, three other exist. Up (the Upper World), down (the Lower World) and center (where we live, and where 'you' always are.)

Because of these early beliefs, the traditional Cherokee have a special regard for the owl and cougar. They are honored ones in some versions of the Creation story. They were the only two who were able to stay awake for the seven nights of Creation. The others fell asleep. Today, because of this, they are nocturnal in their habits and both have night vision.

The owl is seemingly different from other birds, and he resembles an old man as he walks. Sometimes, the owl can be mistaken for a cat with his feathers tufts and silhouette of his head. This resemblance honors his nocturnal brother, the cougar. The owls' eyes are quite large and set directly in front like a persons, and he can close one independent of the other. The cougar is an animal that has screams which resemble those of a woman. He is an animal who has habits that are very secret and unpredictable.

The cedar, pine, spruce, laurel and holly trees have leaves all year long. These plants, too, stayed awake seven nights during the Creation. Because of this, they were given special power, and they are among the most important plants in Cherokee medicine and ceremonies.

The circle is a familiar symbol to traditional Cherokees. The Stomp Dance and other ceremonies involve movements in a circular pattern. In

ancient times, the fire in the council house was built by arranging the wood in a continuous “X” so that the fire would burn in a circular path.

The rivers or “Long Man” were always believed to be sacred, and the practice of going to water for purification and other ceremonies was at one time very common. Today, the river, or any other body of moving water such as a creek, is considered a sacred site, and going to water is still a respected practice by some Cherokee.

The everyday cultural world of the Cherokee includes spiritual beings. Even though the beings are different from people and animals, they are not considered “supernatural.” They are very much a part of the natural, or real world and most people at some point in their lives, have an experience with spiritual beings. One group of spiritual beings still talked about by many Cherokees, are the Little People. They are invisible unless they want to be seen. When seen, they look very much like any other Cherokee, except they are very small, and have long hair, sometimes to the ground.

The Little People need to be dealt with carefully, and it is necessary to observe the traditional rules regarding them. They don’t like to be disturbed, and they may cause a person who continually bothers them to become ‘puzzled’ throughout life. Because of this, traditional Cherokees will not investigate or look when they believe they hear Little People.

If one of the Little People is accidentally seen, or if he or she chooses to show himself, it is not to be discussed or told

of for at least seven years. It is also common practice to not speak about the Little People after night fall.

Traditional Cherokees also believe that after a person dies, his soul often continues to live as a ghost. Ghosts are believed to have the ability to materialize where some people can see them, although some can not.

Source: www.cherokee.org Culture information

Newsletter Articles

We need your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and pictures, so please email them to:

sdccnewsletter@yahoo.com

We would like to hear from you.

Looking for Volunteers

We are looking for individuals to help with the newsletter, someone who can speak the Cherokee language, people interested in genealogy research and cultural resources. So come out to our next meeting and get involved, meet some new friends and share your talents.

Please remember that you do not have to be a Cherokee citizen to take part in our meetings or activities. Simply bring your interest in all things Cherokee and join us for a great time.

Blood Requirement

The Cherokee Nation is under fire for its March 3 vote requiring the tribal citizens have Indian blood, yet most tribes require citizens to have Indian blood.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation requires that those applying for citizenship must be Creek by blood and be able to trace back to a direct ancestor on the 1906 Dawes Roll.

The Dawes Commission was organized in 1893, and it accepted applications for tribal enrollment from American Indians of the “Five Civilized Tribes” between 1899 and 1907. The five tribes are the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, and Chickasaw nations.

The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians requires citizens to have one-fourth Keetoowah Cherokee blood to be a citizen of the tribe.

Two other Oklahoma tribes, the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations, both require people to first apply for a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood. Once they have their CDIB, they are able to apply for citizenship within the tribe.

The Choctaw Nation application for CDIB must show the applicant’s direct lineage to an original enrollee of the Final Choctaw Dawes Rolls by blood.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida, requires those applying for citizenship to meet three requirements: they must have a minimum of one-quarter Florida Seminole blood; they must be able to prove with written documentation that

they are directly related to a Florida Seminole who was listed on the 1957 Tribal Roll; and they must be sponsored for enrollment by a current tribal citizen. The 1957 Tribal Roll is the base roll of the tribe.

The largest tribe in the U.S., the Navajo Nation, has a requirement that a person must be a least one-fourth Navajo to be enrolled and be born to an enrolled member of the tribe.

--Christina Good Voice, Cherokee Phoenix, Nov. 2007

Cherokee Basketry

Native baskets represent the survival and vigor of native societies that were transformed and sometimes disappeared. In *Weaving New Worlds*, Sarah Hill stated that basketry was central to women’s activities and to Cherokee society. Cherokee and other native basket weavers wove into their mats and baskets or painted on them images of the animals and plants around them. They also painted depictions of themselves acting in their social and marital roles.

The women wove mats ordinarily six feet long by four feet across and they were woven in designs. Mats were used in every day life in the home for sitting, sleeping and flooring. Mats were woven to wrap the bodies of the deceased. In council meetings, clan members sat on mats on benches and under hanging mats woven with their clan designs.

Burden baskets were large enough to carry a child and small enough to gather small fruits. The burden baskets had tumplines, flat straps that passes over the forehead and attached to the baskets.

Mats and baskets were made in a double weave method to protect medicine, jewelry and other treasures.

The weavers spent a considerable amount of time outside collecting plants for weaving and dyes. These plants were carefully cultivated and harvested to ensure future crops. They were collected during specific times of the year. The ancient weaver had knowledge of growing seasons as well as correct conditions for plant survival. Once the plants were collected, they were stored, dyed or bleached in the sun. All of these activities most likely were outdoors.

Ceremonial use of baskets declined in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, baskets did not serve a utilitarian use as they were replaced with commercially produced containers.

After the WWII, Cherokee society was transformed even more. As baskets began to lose their value in the economy, they looked for ways to make baskets attractive to the increasing number of tourists. Women, as providers, had always used what they had to make what they needed.

According to ancient Cherokee beliefs, the homeland was the center of the world. They pictured the earth as a floating island suspended by four cords from the sky, which was made of solid rock. The Cherokee called themselves, "Ani-Yun'wiya," the Principal People. A Cherokee belonged to his mother's clan. Cherokee had seven clans, each of which bore a special name. Not only did women begin weaving baskets made with different materials and in different shapes, their baskets became very

elaborate using twilling to create complex designs. They added decorations by curling and twisting the weft.

In 1937, Lottie Stamper, introduced basketry classes in the Eastern Cherokee Nation. The classes in basketry marked a profound change in the way traditions were passed on. Stamper collected old patterns, copied them in notebooks and reproduced them on graph paper.

Western Cherokees began making heavy pleated hickory and willow baskets. Eastern Cherokees began weaving with native maple after they accomplished weaving with white oak splints. The Eastern and Western Cherokees continue to weave and dye their wood and river cane splints with puccoon for orange, reds and yellow, the inner bark of the walnut trees and walnut hulls for dark brown and berries for red and blue.

The Cherokees use crossed sticks, often river cane pieces, to firm the bottom when starting splint baskets. Collections of baskets towards the end of the nineteenth century show some common practices in production of Cherokee basketry. Many cane baskets are rimmed with cane and bound with hickory. Some have fabric handles knotted through the sides like those made before removal. By the beginning of the twentieth century, weavers started putting on carved white oak handles.

Source: <http://cherokeebaskets.com>