

# EDITORIAL



The very word "ceremony" is a very broad term. It can be applied to many different situations. But within the Native American context, when it is a spiritually based ceremony it all has to do with acknowledging Creator, The Great One, and giving a little something back in appreciation for the multiple blessings poured out on us day by day.

In the past 6 years that I have been with our people I have been increasingly aware of the importance of ceremony in our lives. I have tried to study into how it was with the Ancestors, and I saw that ceremony was done joyfully. There was much thanksgiving and happiness. Music and dancing were almost always included in the ceremony. The sacred fire was always a part of ceremony of the "Real People", the "Tsalagi". The Sacred Fire represented the presence of The Great One here on earth and in all the 7 sacred directions.

I have learned that the beautiful thing about ceremony in our lives is that one does not have to wait to be with a group of people before they do ceremony. We can do our own ceremony daily. A good time for this is early in the morning, just before we begin our daily activities. Morning prayer and meditation, perhaps with the smoke of smoldering sage nearby, is an excellent way to start the day and keep one's self walking on the Red Road of balance, beauty, and harmony.

Living in two worlds is a necessity for those of us who wish to maintain the traditional ways and mindset. Walking the Ceremonial Trail is life style that can keep us connected to the spiritual awareness known by our ancestors and expressed in their ceremonies and daily lives. Some of our ancestors perceived that ceremony kept us and the whole creation in balance, and if ever ceremony should cease to be then the result would be the end of the world.

Closely tied in to ceremonies are our various ceremonial grounds. Of paramount importance, of course, is our National Tribal Grounds, located in southern Georgia near the town of Ochlocknee. If it is true that we as

people need ceremony in our lives, the same is true for the ceremonial grounds. Nothing can be more desolate than ceremonial grounds in which ceremony is rarely if ever conducted. Such grounds are doomed to a slow but certain death. Thus we see the importance of Ceremonial People going frequently to Ceremonial Grounds to do Ceremonial Things.

And the result is, we all seek to live a more tranquil life knowing we are in harmony with Earth Mother and that we are walking the Red Road in Balance and in Beauty. Also we generate a great pride in our ancestral heritage, knowing its richness and its wisdom and its timelessness.

It is now time for the elders to impart their wisdom to the young. The torch of tradition and ceremony must be continually passed on from generation to generation. The young, for their part, must guard against the many modern distractions that could lure them away from interest and dedication to learning the old ways of the Ancestors.

It seems to me, that the "Ceremonial Life" is the way to go for us in the South-eastern Cherokee Council who wish to live and pass on the richness of our heritage. The ancestors expect no less of us and our great grandchildren deserve no less.

## *Rick Runningbear*

The Cherokee Talking Leaves is published by the Southeastern Cherokee Council. One copy per household is sent.

### STAFF:

Editor: Rick Runningbear

Culture: John Many Winds Ellis

Language: Lee Spotted Pony Billingsley

For Women: Ellen Spirit Seeker Fisher

For Kids: Noqah Adkins

## THE CEREMONIAL PATH:

I have been walking down a different path here of late. I am not sure how to describe it but I will call it the "Ceremonial Path". 7 years ago I did not give much thought to such things although I always felt this "calling" towards a spiritual life but was not sure how to find or express it.

IT SEEEMS TO ME, that our Native ancestors derived great benefit from the ceremonies they performed. And it seems that we can still derive those same benefits from ceremony today in our modern fast moving world.

In my work as a home visiting physical therapist a few years ago I would often drive by a shop operated by a Native American. I later found out it was none other than Starr Thunderfoot of the Buffalo Creek Band of the Southeastern Cherokee Council. I finally stopped at her shop and met her and thus became the beginning of my "ceremonial path". Before I knew it I was a member of the Buffalo Creek Band and of the SeCCI. I also began to hang out with another group of a "sister band" known as the Chota band under the leadership of Chief Jim Howling Wolf. I was led to observe and participate in CEREMONY.