

SEEKING MY NATIVE

HERITAGE BY Elmer James

Richeson

Osiyo! I thought I would write a bit about myself, although I am not sure just how to add up my "blood quantum", or how much Native blood I have.

In 1966, at the age of 14, I was getting a dental check-up by a dentist who also did part time forensic work. He looked at the shape of my teeth and asked me if I had any Indian blood in my family. From that remark by a dentist, started my 40 plus year hunt for my family history, starting with my mother telling me of her grandmother who used to braid sweet grass, and even cast hexes and carried a black pebble in one apron pocket and a white one in the other, always separately.

My mother also told me of her grandfather who came for a visit wearing a Cherokee style turban. I later found out that it was not her actual grandfather, but actually a great uncle. I remember thinking, at the time, that it was a brave and proud thing to do in the 1920's. At that time it definitely was not "cool" to ride a horse around Tennessee, Kentucky, or West Virginia reminding people you were still here and not removed west of the Mississippi!

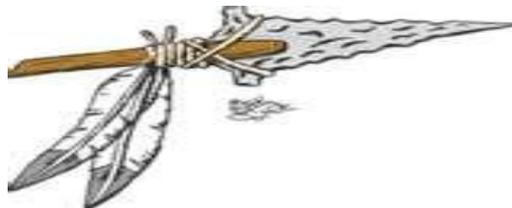
Now let's jump ahead to the year 2009. I was now 57 and finally had a computer and I began to re-start the family research which my cousin had begun twenty years ago. After finding my great grandmother's wedding "bond", I discovered that her Dad's name was not Buck Hicks, but "James H. Hicks". Anyway, the genealogical floodgates now opened.

It seems funny. I was born in Hempstead, New York and tracked my family back to Chief Charles R. Hicks and Nancy Broom of North Carolina. Depending on whose research you believe, four more generations back to

a Thomas Hicks and his wife, Ann Woron Maccling (a Mohawk girl from Herkimer County, New York. They lived in Hempstead, New York. I truly believe that life does come around full circle. During my life I have always tried to follow the "Path" as well as life as the particular situations would allow. Fate would always return me to what I felt inside, but never had documented proof of.

Howard Treadwell, of the Poosepatuck Nation in Mastic, New York, was a good friend of mine, a fellow worker, and best man at my wedding. From knowing him, I met other people of the Shinnecock, Nargansett, Mohawk, and Cherokee communities. Through him I also met an archeologist and worked with him several seasons on Native sites that were in danger of disappearing from suburban growth and looters. It is an understatement for me to say that I learned a lot from him and his associates and about their cultures, pre-European contact struggles, and later historic struggles. Their enthusiasm and ways of looking at life has stuck with me all these years.

Whenever one week in my life seemed to just be like the one before it, something would happen to wake me up. It might be something like finding an ancient stone spear point or meeting a new family in the neighborhood who just happened to be a Lakota family who was part of a drum society! I do not believe things in life happen by coincidence. I believe all things happen for a reason. Life has always brought me back to who I really am inside: "Tsalagi"! Wado!



Elmer James Richeson

Talking Leaves In Need Of Financial Support:

The Cherokee Talking Leaves has been the communication instrument throughout this tribe for many years. In view of the fact that our bands are scattered over a far ranging geographical area, it is an ongoing challenge to keep our members informed about the goings on at the various bands and also at the National Headquarters. The Talking Leaves newsletter answers, in part, that challenge.

Printing out this newspaper is the single largest item on the budget of our "far from rich" organization. At this time we do not require members to pay for subscriptions to the paper, and funds to support the printing and mailing out of this instrument is entirely dependent on voluntary contributions and those limited funds coming in incidentally with the slow influx of new members.

There is a real danger that the Talking Leaves will not be able to continue in its present form unless adequate funds can come in to allow the paper to meet its expenses. Therefore, an appeal goes out to all our members who value this time tested newspaper of the Southeastern Cherokee Council, to make special efforts to lend financial support directed to covering the expense of printing and mailing out this vital communication instrument.

We always hesitate to ask for monetary contributions from our members, but our expenses are real and we wish to change the "red ink" into "black ink", when it comes to the budget of the Talking Leaves and the other financial needs of our tribe as well.

Send contributions to Pam Sandusky

P.O. Box 367, Ochlocknee, GA 31773