



Speak Cherokee

A newsletter for language and cultural topics!

By Brian Wilkes

ga-ta: "new" fire, kindled after the "old" fire is extinguished.

a-ya-sta-sgi: "old" fire, burning since the last new fire was kindled.

a-tsi-la: common word for fire.

a-tsi-lv-sgi: flower, blossom, flame.

i-tse: new.

i-tse-i-yu-sdi: fresh, green.

Se-lu-tsu-ni-ge-sdi-sdi: corn sprouting, the second major holiday, today called "new corn" in English.

a-da-we-hi: Elders, in the sense of culture carriers entrusted with important knowledge; day-keepers who understood the old calendar and ceremonial cycle. Also used to mean angel or prophet. They were consulted on which would be the most auspicious days to schedule events.

u-na-la-sa-lv-di-i: a storage building where all of the agricultural tools were kept for the community, including:

ga-la-ga-di: hoe,

a-go-de-sdi: spade,

a-go-de-a: shovel,

da-ga-lo-sti-u-i-la-ta: pointed stick used to make holes for seedlings. It was considered offensive to ear off a large part of our Mother's skin with plows or tillers just to plant seeds, when a smaller hole would do.

a-nv-yi: the month of March. Contracted form of "windy month", it puns with "strawberry time" since some plants sprout early.

Ka-won-ni: the month of April. Usually translated "flowering", it puns with the word for "duck" since migrating ducks return at this time.



Above: Rick Uwas'gadoga Pearce



Some Cherokee ceremonial masks are very expressive of emotions

Rick Pearce is an ardent student of the Cherokee language. He studies the language and does what he can to teach it with on line "mini lessons". Rick lives in the state of Georgia in an historic area that pertains to the Creek Indians. The Creeks (Muskogees) and the Cherokees, often had skirmishes with each other in historic and prehistoric times over dominance of a territory now occupied by Georgia and the eastern part of Alabama. The Etowah river, north of modern day Atlanta was often the approximate "border" between these two opposing Native cultures, but this was very fluid and changeable from age to age. In the next column is one lesson by Brian Wilkes that Rick has shared. Further resources can be found at: www.speakcherokee.com -



Above: Hand-made ceremonial mask by Rick Uwas'gadoga Pearce



Rick Pearce makes these ceremonial masks out of special gourds.



Above, gourd masks with ceremonial "Eagle Wands" used in dances.