

The Medicine Wheel As A Source of Ceremonial Medicine



To the traditional Native mind, "medicine" is more of a spiritual thing than it is a physical thing. It goes to things of nature to find help or strength to help us overcome obstacles, or "get stronger" to meet some challenge.

The ancient medicine wheels which were found on the American continent were made of stones placed on the ground in the form of a circle. Some had a smaller circle of stones near the center, and in the very center there was either a large stone or a pile of stones. Some of these sites are carefully preserved for us to see and wonder at today.

The Southeastern Cherokee Council, during the course of the last several years, have incorporated the medicine wheel into ceremonial use. This can be seen at the National Grounds near Ochlocknee, Georgia, the Bear Spirit Grounds in northeastern Tennessee, and the former Chota Band located near Maryville, Tennessee.

The concept of the sacredness of the Circle is intrinsic in the Medicine Wheel. The Native mind perceives how the world, indeed, the universe seems to operate on the principal of a circle and circular motions. The sacred directions of the Native mind, are also utilized in the medicine wheel.

It is believed that the various stones used in the ancient medicine wheels each had a different function or "medicine" based on its intrinsic qualities or location on the wheel. If approached in the right state of mind, with the use of other medicines such as tobacco, sweet grass, sage, or Cedar, and with prayer and fasting and sacred chants or dances, that persons could find power from the circle of stones.

The Sweat Lodge As a Source of Ceremonial Medicine



The Sweat Lodge has been in use by Native Americans since prehistoric times. It was used in different ways by different Indian nations, and the structure and materials used varied as well. The Lakota tradition of sweat lodges has been well preserved into modern times and is often considered the standard for all others.

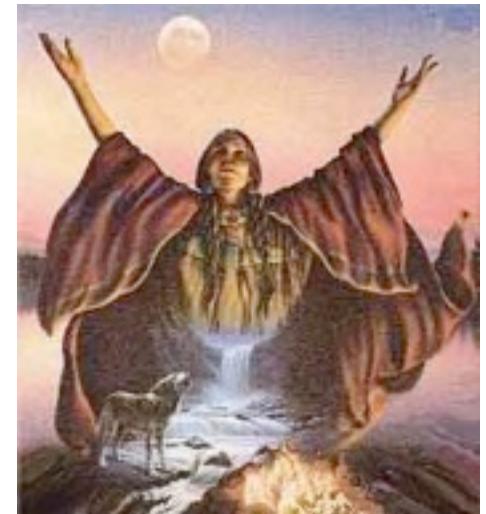
Even the Cherokee, an Eastern Woodland tribe much different culturally from the plains Indians of the west who followed the buffalo, used a type of sweat lodge, especially for physical healing purposes.

The basic concept is to heat stones in a fire and bring them into a small structure into which participants have entered, to close up the entrance to the lodge and with the use of water to create steam, conduct a ceremony in rounds in which the intense heat brings the participants into a state of aroused spiritual awakening and regeneration.

Often the sweat lodge ceremony is the precursor to a more extended ceremony known as "going up on the mountain for a vision quest". In these kinds of ceremonies, fasting is usually part of the process.

We of the Southeastern Cherokee Council have used the sweat lodge at various of our band's grounds, and indeed, also at our National Tribal Ground near Ochlocknee, Georgia. It is one of various ceremonies that we seek to preserve and utilize as a connecting link to ancient spirituality that still has positive effects on us today in this high tech world we live in. One must be careful to select a professional ceremonial person to lead them through this medicine.

Going To Water As A Source of Ceremonial Medicine



Going To Water, is a traditional Cherokee cleansing ceremony that is still carried out by traditional Cherokees today in one form or another. The original way, so far as our recorded history tells us, is for men and women to go to separate areas of a moving "living" river and immerse themselves in the water 7 times (a sacred number for the traditional Cherokee).

The devout Cherokee, in times gone by, would go to water daily near the beginning of the day all through the year. The idea of cleansing was involved and the releasing of bad thoughts and emotions with the help of the water. Some of the hardiness of the Cherokee people could perhaps be attributed to their ancient custom of going to water even in the winter time. They hardened their physical bodies to withstand the cold dip in the water for a short period of time and thus were a clean and healthy people as contrasted with the arriving Europeans who were arriving on the east coast of America.

In modern times, many Cherokee groups use more convenient means of going to water which does not require immersing the entire body in a river 7 times. Nevertheless, there are still strict conservative traditionalist who still insist on the old method of immersing the entire body in water 7 times. At our National Tribal Grounds near Ochlocknee, GA, we go to water before ceremonies.