



BEARS EMERGE FROM THEIR DENS THIS TIME OF YEAR

The Great Smoky Mountains is where the "Principal People" had the center of their society. In these mountains are many caves, and some of them are the winter home of the black bears that are abundant. Now that Spring-time is here, the bears are out of their caves and dens. It is said that neighboring tribes called the Cherokee "Tsalagi" which meant something like "cave dwellers", or possibly "those who dwell in the land of caves". The ancient Cherokees did not call themselves by that name but rather "AniYunwiah" meaning (The Real People).

There are many legends about bears. One of them describes how at one time the Bear Nation decided to wage war on humans and made their own bows and arrows for this purpose. But they could never shoot an arrow straight as their long claws kept catching on the bow strings and this made the arrows fly crooked.

To some, the Bear became their medicine totem. They studied the bear and learned lessons from its behavior. They drew strength from having "Bear Medicine". The bear is the strongest animal in the forest and because he sleeps for long periods during the winter, it is believed that he had many dreams and visions during hibernation. A person with "Bear Medicine" is always studying dreams and visions of the night.

The Cherokee hunted the bear and used all parts of its body, for food, clothing, and tools. Thus the Bear gives all for the benefit of the people.

EAGLES HAVE STRONG MEDICINE

All First Nations have a reverence for the Eagle. The Eagle, once an endangered species due to DDT contamination of the environment, it is making a comeback across the country. Eagle medicine is often considered to be harmonious with Bear Medicine.

The Cherokees rarely killed an eagle. Only special persons that pertained to the Bird Clan and were Medicine People who knew the ceremony and protocol could kill an Eagle. Cherokees would not wear an eagle feather into battle. It was too sacred. It was used for the sacred ceremonies and dances.

Any part of the eagle, such as a bone or a feather, is considered to possess the spirit and medicine of the eagle. Some ceremonial leaders use an Eagle wing fan, or an eagle wing bone whistle in ceremony.

One who possesses Eagle medicine was not born with it, but it is earned over a lifetime.

The eagle is said to fly higher than any other bird. Thus, he approaches close to the Creator. When one smokes the prayer pipe, the prayer enters into the smoke that departs from the pipe and makes its invisible journey into the heaven. Eagle knows this and swoops down and catches the prayers and carries them on his wings high into the heavens and presents them to our Creator.

The eagle embodies the highest aspirations of the people. Do you seek to attain high things in your life? Then, seek the wisdom of the Eagle.

THE SWIFT MEDICINE OF THE DEER

The deer was abundant in the mountain habitats of the "Real People". It was used for its meat and its hide and its antlers by the Tsalagi people. Most likely the most abundant meat that the people subsisted on along with the fish and vegetables and nuts and roots gathered. The deer was important enough that a whole Cherokee clan was named after it. The Deer Clan people were known for their swiftness of foot, like the deer. Some of them even domesticated the deer. Some were swift messenger runners carrying important messages from village to village.

The ancient Cherokee used the hide of the deer for clothing, and members of the Deer Clan were known as expert seamstress's to make items useful to the people out of the deer skins.

There are some who have deer medicine. They are alert and watchful as are the deer. They are swift to put themselves out of danger's way and to find better situations for themselves.

Some of our drums are made from the skins of deer, and thus deer medicine plays a part in sounding out the heart-beat of Mother Earth.

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