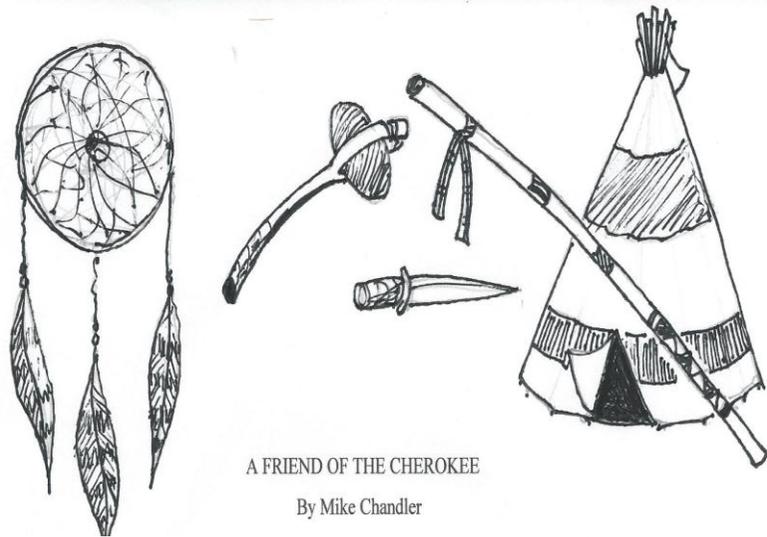


A FRIEND OF THE CHEROKEE

By Mike Chandler



Art Work above by the author.

Since becoming friends with Jim Howling Wolf Allison, he has invited my beautiful wife Anne and me to become associate members of the Chota Band of the Southeastern Cherokee Council. We were both honored to be accepted so quickly as friends with such a wonderful group of people. To us it was a great opportunity to be with a different culture. What I noticed at first was how the Chota Band manage to live and operate in two separate and distinct worlds. First, there is the modern world with all of its amenities. Then, secondly, there is the world of the Original American People. Their world is a world of respect and appreciation for the soil we live on, the air we breathe, and thankfulness for the bounty by which we live. All and all, it is really a beautiful path to follow. I felt so strongly that this was the correct way to appreciate my life and existence, that I was really wanting to know if I were in any way actually related to the Cherokee people, so that instead of "associate members" of the Chota Band, we could actually get our "Green Card" as true and authentic Original Americans. So my journey begins. I have spent two years or more going over family genealogy records in order to determine what for me would be something of great value to add to the already rich history of my lineage: Native blood.

Before my father died on April 21, 2012, he told me that it had been passed on by word of mouth, that some of my ancestors had married in with the Melungeons. Melungeons are original American people of mixed white, black, and original American blood, living in the southern Appalachian region. People from the Scottish clans married into many of the tribes in and around East Tennessee, and I wondered if the McClouds (also spelled McLeods) from Scotland, from whom I descend, did indeed marry into the Cherokee people, as well as having married in with the Melungeons. This question has stirred the interest of folks from the Scottish people to whom I am related, and several of my friends from the Southeastern Cherokee Council, Inc. as well.

The Cherokee groups that we have visited with at Chota and at the Bear Spirit Grounds seemed to be interested in my interest in the Native groups of the Americas. We have talked about and shared information about many of the tribes in North America as well as Middle and South America. The Hopi in the Southwest United States as well as the Aztecs of Mexico have been discussed as we shared

stories and ideas about who we are as human beings, how we got here, and where we will go after our sojourn on this planet. All of the stories are grounded in a very strong SPIRITUALITY, a close relationship with the Creator, and a love for all of creation. My plan is to travel one day to visit with Starr Thunderfoot Macauley, leader of the Buffalo Creek Band, and go over the rolls of the names of the Cherokee ancestors to see if the blood lines cross with my ancestors. I have a very good friend, Shirley English, who has done quite a large amount of research tracing my late father's maternal line through the McCloud Clan from Scotland. She has done a marvelous job of tying all of this together. She has gifted me an ancestor line chart that shows who the folks are that I descend from in the McCloud Clan. I will be traveling to see Starr Thunderfoot Macauley very soon now that I actually have the lineage chart in my hand.

When I was a teenager, my little brother and I would read all that we could about America's Native people. We made outfits, rubbed mud onto our bodies until we looked reddish, and put on a dramatic play for my family one evening on the back patio of our house in Fountain City up in Knoxville, Tennessee. We wrote out a script that showed how resourceful the native tribes were at collecting berries, chasing game, and growing crops. It is a good thing to know how to do these things. One never knows if by some chance the economy were to get so bad that it would not be possible for someone to afford groceries, for example. Planting a garden would be a very good thing to know how to do, and not a very hard thing to accomplish. The benefit and pride of having grown one's own food far outweighs the little amount of effort it takes to bring a crop to harvest. This one skill was a good way to train young folks on how to survive if in fact we did experience another downturn in the economy as bad as the Great Depression.

I have picked a beautiful morning in July to travel to Sevierville, Tennessee to finally meet with Starr Thunderfoot Macauley to search for the proof I would need to be recognized as a Native American. It is a rather cool day in July as I start out for Sevierville. I have called ahead to make sure Starr is going to be there. A beautiful morning could not be outdone one would think, but it was: Starr graciously welcomed me into her store at the Smoky Mountain Flea market on Dumpling Valley Road in Sevierville. She introduced me to her son, and we began to talk. I thought that my best chance of having Native blood would come through my Scottish heritage....not so! Thunderfoot discovered that my best chance of proving my bloodline crosses with the Cherokee people is not with the McClouds from Scotland, but on my dad's maternal side with my Grandmother, who's maiden name was Smith. Many of the Smiths intermarried with the original Americans. Because Smith is a very common name it would be very hard to say that it did not occur, but just as well, Thunderfoot discovers, on the Old Settlers roles, that there is a James Smith on my father's maternal side. Now things get a little interesting. The dates line up. There is a James Smith occurring on both the Settlers Roles and in my family tree. He was born in 1842 and died at the age of 62 in the year 1904. The Settlers Roles reflect that there was a James Smith born in 1851. However, my lineage chart shows that our James Smith was born in 1842. Now my mission is to revisit with Shirley English and let her know what I have discovered.

It is funny how things can change so quickly. I was so sure that my lineage with the Cherokee would be determined through the McClouds. As it stands, the Smiths are my best bet. Starr also suggested that I look into my mom's heritage as well. My grandmother on my mom's side was a Miller. The Millers appear quite often on the Cherokee role books. These discoveries lead me back to doing a little more homework with Shirley. In the mean time I will sign up with the Chota group as an associate member. When I prove, or have further evidence that I am actually related to the Cherokee, I simply will report this to the Southeastern Cherokee Council, Inc, and they will change my status. Thank you Thunderfoot, thank you Howling Wolf, and thank you Rick Runningbear for your help and ideas about how to become closer to my brothers and sisters of the Cherokee people. # # #