

(Native Culture, continued.....)

Creator is with us all the time, no matter what we are doing. Native ceremony acknowledges Creator's presence and action in our lives. His spirit is in all of our actions, and in all of those actions that happen to us.



Indians learn these concepts through their language. Using a language based on verbs, action words, a Cherokee speaker grows up understanding that the world is full of action, always changing, always being re-created. When stories are told during winter, when ceremonies are done at the time the earth shows us, when gardens are planted as the maple trees flower; a Cherokee speaker learns how the cycles of the earth impact our lives. By calling your leaders family names, your Chief as 'Grandfather,' your boss as 'Uncle,' your neighbor as 'sister;' a Cherokee speaker grows up with the idea of how people are all related. 'Grandfather' is a verb to a Cherokee. By calling someone Grandfather, a Cherokee is acknowledging

that person as 'grandfathering' them, acting as a grandfather would in their lives. By naming plants after what they do, or how they grow, a Cherokee speaker learns how these plants interact with us, and so how we are interconnected with them. By not using 'it' to refer to animals, and using 'he' instead, A Cherokee speaker begins to understand how animals are interconnected with our lives, same as the people we know. By calling the sun 'Grandfather,' and the moon 'Grandmother,' a Cherokee speaker acknowledges the role these things have in his life, as a grandparent would give advice, teaching not just facts but wisdom and good judgment as well. By speaking with Creator as to a grandparent, we are acknowledging that the Creator has an active, grandparent role in our lives, always, everywhere.



When we respect one another we communicate with each other, and so we both learn, we both grow. This is not just for people. Animals, plants, and all that is around us will speak to us if we show

respect. However, a deer for example, will not use Cherokee or English language. He will use his own language, his own way of communicating. And if we respect the deer enough to listen to him or pay attention to what he is doing, he will show us what we need to know, after all, Creator's spirit is working in him the same as in each one of us. When we respect everything around us, we respect the Creator's spirit that is in it all.



Native culture is characterized most of all then by respect. Indians can dress, shop, attend school & sports events, live in houses with nuclear families, and drive the same cars as most everyone else, and still be Indian, because of the awareness they have of all that is around them, and the respect they show to all around them.

Lee Uwoyeni Billingsely

