

THE GREAT NEW MOON CEREMONY

by Lee Uwoyeni Billingsley



The Great New Moon event is the Tsalagi New Year, celebrated with the first new moon nearest (before or after) the Autumnal Equinox. For example, in the year 2013, Great New Moon was celebrated on The National Tribal Grounds in Ochlocknee the weekend of October 5. During this ceremony, a new sacred fire was made, beginning our ceremonial year with preparation for the coming cold moons by sharing what we have with others to be sure everyone has enough for the coming winter. It is a time to renew, to restart, and to prepare. When we involve ourselves in ceremony we are reaching out for that which is transcendent, beyond ourselves, outside our "medicine wheels", beyond our usual realm of senses. This is especially true for Great New Moon. We "dream in" (make plans, offer solutions, build expectations and hopes) the New Year as part of ceremony, we are involving our Creator in what we do. In this way Ceremony lets us walk with our Creator into the New Year, so we may be more sure of our paths. Among the people we give gifts, we share, we make sure everyone has enough food, clothes, firewood, or whatever else is needed to get us all through the cold moons. We discuss what we may expect will happen or we make plans for the coming year with others. If we are alone, we burn sage and tobacco and meditate on the New Year. We build the coming year in our heads, with our hand in the hand of our Creator.

Lee Uwoyeni

ATAHUNA

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Cherokees celebrate Atahuna after Great New Moon. Atahuna is a time for mending relationships, and establishing and strengthening new relationships. It is a time for giving names, making apprentices and adoptions. (Not the only time for doing these things but a good time since everyone is already gathered together for Great New Moon.) It is a time for public and private apologies, and for healing between people.

The people are looking ahead to being close together during the coming cold moons, and so do not want to carry grudges or unfinished business with them. So we fix our relationships in order to be comfortable with each other through the winter. This ceremony in SeCCI is open to members only, since apologies made may reveal something that no one outside SeCCI needs to know about. Ceremony at Atahuna is focused on the individual, what is bothering that individual, and what might be done to fix that. It is a time to be open during ceremony to both give and accept apologies. This is a ceremony that involves a complete look inside ourselves and to be open to others looking inside us as well; a time to be open and honest before all of our people.

If you happen to be alone during this time, burn sage and tobacco. Offer prayers for those who may have hurt you, and make attempts at reconciling any differences you may have with anyone. Healing in this way deeply benefits everyone.

Lee Uwoyeni

EDITOR FOR TALKING LEAVES SOUGHT

The Cherokee Talking Leaves, official newsletter of the Southeastern Cherokee Council, is looking for a person with editorial ability to become associate editor of this newsletter.

Such a person should recognize that this is a voluntary position that is performed out of a desire to serve the tribe and benefit the communications between all the tribal peoples scattered across this great country. Such a person would need to have writing ability and reasonably good computer skills.

Such a person should be able to make a long-term commitment to the position and have the ability to garner news from the various bands and individuals in the tribe. This position would be a post that would lead into becoming the Editor In Chief of the Cherokee Talking Leaves.

Interested persons should contact Rick Runningbear Dunifer either by E-mail, regular mail, or phone. Contact information is:

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New Tazewell, TN 37825

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The Cherokee Talking Leaves has been serving the Tribe almost from its inception. For many years the editor was John Night Eagle Curtis. The current editor is Rick Runningbear Dunifer, who has been editor since 2008.

As the leadership positions of the tribe are often filled with elders who are aging, there is an ever present need of "young blood" to step up to the plate and carry the torch of responsibility for the tribe.

Anyone with journalism training or experience, who has worked in a newspaper-printing establishment, or simply has an interest in promoting the continuation of Talking Leaves, is invited to apply.

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