

CHEROKEE MEDICINE WAY

By Ellen Spirit Seeker Fisher

It was a time of Cherokee beginnings when all beings spoke a common language. The mountain spirits knew that strange beings would be coming from the stars to Turtle Island. They would come as light beings. The mountain spirits also knew these beings would be hairless and unable to survive the cold winter season in spite of their warm star light. They would need shelter and warm clothing.

A council was called. The animals were strongly opposed to sharing their pelts with these strange creatures. However, the animals knew these spirits could teach other animals how to stay in harmony and balance in the circle of this world and that they would teach other humans who were also coming.

So the animals agreed to gift the light beings their skins if they agreed to take pelts only after following ceremony, asking permission and giving thanks for the gift. The mountain spirits were satisfied with this compromise and all was well.

The mountain spirits then worked to carve a trail with the help of Thunder Beings. The mountains opened themselves to hard rains that created what is now called the Tuckasegee River valley. This was a place where humans could live and care for Mother Earth and her children.

According to elders, the people now called "Cherokee" existed in their beginnings as small bands of humans

originating from the Four Directions of the night sky; that they arrived long before recorded data of human existence on Mother Earth. These people were *no lun see* and the Tuckasegee River valley was their home on Mother Earth. It is possible that these *no lun see*, Star People, were the same "little people" of other Cherokee legends.

The Cherokee of old, who lived near the Tuckasegee, were the Kituhwa (*kah doh wah*). It is believed that these Kituhwa were the true light people. While the Cherokee Medicine way might seem outdated compared to that of today, these Cherokee understood the connection with Mother Earth and all beings in the circle of life. They did not fight the first intruders because they knew they were coming. It is said that they eventually retreated into the caves of the mountains.

The ancient medicine started with learning to track the animals and how to catch fish, as well as proper procedures for raising and harvesting the abundant produce Mother Earth supplied. Values such as uses of fire for cooking and for ceremony, and uses of tobacco for ceremony and giving thanks were taught in the early days of Cherokee life.

The circle continues today. By studying and learning about our ancestors and their ways we bring our ancestor's teaching to present. From the present we carry out teaching and ceremony so that it may extend into the future. In this way we become the ancestors for future generations. This journey is a circle of the Four

Directions, which is the Indian way of life.

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Adapted from "the Cherokee Herbal" by J.T. Garrett (Bear & Company 2003)



CEREMONIAL CALENDAR

Please note below the important dates of ceremonial events at the National Tribal Grounds for the year 2008:

JANUARY 26 – Home Gathering (Cold Moon Month #2)

FEBRUARY 23 – Home Gathering (Cold Moon Month # 3)

MARCH 29 – First New Moon Of Spring Ceremony: 7:30 a.m.- Sunrise Prayer and awakening of the grounds. 8:15 a.m. – Breakfast. 10 a.m. – Council Work Day. Noon – Lunch. 1 p.m. – Black Wolf Warrior meeting. 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6: p.m. – Feast

APRIL 5 – Planting Of The Corn

MAY 10 – Green Corn Ceremony: 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6 p.m. – Feast.

MAY 31 – Memorial Day Gathering

JUNE 14 – Founders Day: 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6 p.m. – Feast.

JULY 19 – Ripe Corn Ceremony: 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6:p.m. – Feast.

AUGUST 16 – New Moon Pipe Ceremony (teaching)

SEPTEMBER - no ceremony

OCTOBER 11 – Great New Moon Ceremony (Cherokee New Year) 10 a.m. – Annual Membership meeting. 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6 p.m. – Feast.

OCTOBER 25 – Atahuna: 4 p.m. – Ceremony. 6 p.m. – Feast.

NOVEMBER 22 – Bounding Bush Ceremony / Chief's Feast: 11 a.m. – Ceremony. 2 p.m. – Feast.

DECEMBER 13 – Home Gathering (Cold Moon Month # 1)

All who can are cordially invited to attend these events at the National Tribal Grounds in Ochlocknee. The fellowship and food are always great and the ceremonies are spiritually uplifting.

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