



San Diego Cherokee Community Newsletter

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BIA approves CN Constitutional Amendment

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has finally acknowledged that the federal government no longer has the authority to approve amendments to the Cherokee Nation Constitution. The BIA's top official, Carl Artman, in a letter dated August 9, cited a June 23 vote of the Cherokee people and agreed that federal approval of amendments to the CN Constitution would no longer be necessary.

This letter ends an eight-year struggle by the Cherokee Nation to remove the BIA from its Constitutional process. Chad Smith, Principal Chief of the CN stated that the acknowledgment should be seen as a victory for all tribes who understand the importance of self-governance.

The Cherokee Nation re-affirmed its 2003 Constitutional amendment rejecting BIA approval with a 67% yes vote on June 23.

For more information and to view a copy of the BIA's letter about the Constitution and about Cherokee Nation funding

issues, visit the Cherokee Nation's web site at www.cherokee.org

BIA's Approval Letter can be viewed at:

http://www.cherokee.org/docs/news/BIA_ltr_Artman_080920007_readable.pdf.

Meeting September 23

Our next meeting is September 23 at 1 p.m. at Lake Murray. Take I-8 to the Lake Murray Blvd exit. Go north for ½ mile & turn left on Kiowa Dr. This is a potluck picnic, so bring a dish and share. Just look for our signs. We will have a special presentation on the health care services provided in San Diego county for the Cherokee Nation's citizens.

So please come join us to see what can be provided in the way of health care.

Cherokee Nation May Get Funding Cut

The Cherokee Nation is at risk to lose its federal funding if it doesn't restore full citizenship rights to Freedmen. Rep. Diane Watson, D-CA, is the driving

force behind the federal legislation, HR 2824, that would cut off federal funds and sever U.S. government relations with CN until the tribe restores Freedmen citizenship.

Cherokee citizens voted in a March 3 special election to amend the Cherokee Constitution to limit citizenship to those with Indian blood.

H.R. 2824 and other appropriation amendments could 1) leave 6,500 people without jobs in Oklahoma 2) Create a social service crisis in Oklahoma 3) Leave thousands without health care 4) Infringe on the Cherokee Nation's sovereignty.

Contact your U.S. Senator and Representatives and voice your opinions on H.R. 2824. Rep. Watson can be reached at her Washington D.C. office at 202-225-7084 or at her Los Angeles office 323-965-1422. She can also be contacted through her web site at <http://www.house.gov/watson/contact.shtml>.

Also visit <http://cherokeevoice.org>

By Christina Good Voice, Cherokee Phoenix, September, 2007.

Did you know. . .

In 1821, a member of the Cherokee Nation named Sequoyah invented a written alphabet for the Cherokee language. This is the only time in history of the world that an illiterate individual would create an alphabet for their own language. It is actually a syllabary. Each of the 86 characters represents a syllable in the Cherokee language. The system was so simple

that the vast majority of the Cherokees were able to become literate with just a few weeks of study.

By Phil Konstantin

Sequoyah

Sequoyah was born in the 1770s in the Cherokee village of Tuskegee on the Tennessee River, Sequoyah was of mixed blood whose mother, Mureth, belonged to the Paint Clan. Sometimes the young man was known by his English name, George Gist or Guess, a legacy from his white father.

Sequoyah was reared in the old tribal ways and customs, became a hunter and fur trader. He was also a skilled silver craftsman.

Handicapped from a hunting accident and therefore having more time for contemplation and study, Sequoyah supposedly set about to devise his own system of communication in 1809. He devoted the next dozen years to his task, taking time to serve as a soldier in the War of 1812 and the Creek War.

Within several months of Sequoyah's unveiling of his invention, a substantial number of people in the Cherokee Nation reportedly were able to read and write in their own language. Many mixed bloods were already able to read and write in English, but the syllabary made it virtually everyone in the Cherokee Nation, young and old, to master the language in a relatively short period of time.

In 1827, the Cherokee council appropriated funding for the establishment of a national newspaper. Early the following year, the hand press and syllabary characters in type were

shipped by water from Boston and transported overland the last 200 miles by wagon to the capital of the Cherokee Nation, New Echota. The inaugural issue of the newspaper appeared on February 21, 1828, "Tsa la gi Tsu lehisnunhi" or "Cherokee Phoenix", printed in parallel columns in Cherokee and English. This was the first Indian newspaper published in the U.S.

Source:

www.powersource.com/gallery/people/sequoyah.html

Cherokee National holiday

By Steve Spencer

My visit started in Oklahoma City when I was met at the airport by my Cousin D. Although he is not Cherokee, (we are Baines cousins) he is related to many Cherokee Ballards in Oklahoma. We had a great nice drive from Oklahoma City to Tahlequah. I had no idea what to expect or what kind of reception I would receive, due to the politically charged issue of Cherokee Freedman and the decision to reinstate them to the rolls. Although I have yet to enroll, my position is this. I think that it was an injustice. My great grandfathers Benjamin Beck's enrollment card clearly lists George Drumgoole, Cherokee Indian as his father. But because the Dawes commission elected not to place him on the Cherokee by blood roll, he was listed on the Freedman roll. This is the excuse given to exclude the Freedmen. The documents do not list any Cherokee ancestry, regardless of the fact that in his case his father was Cherokee. All the Freedmen who are

fighting this fight appear to be in similar situations - obvious Cherokee ancestry that was not documented by the Dawes commission.

We arrived in Tahlequah on Saturday September 1, 2007 and saw two circus tents and I thought to myself "is this all there is?" I was expecting something a little bigger. We parked, got outside, and listened to some music, bought some crafts, visited some cooking demonstrations. Everyone was warm and friendly. We got a map and realized that the event was at various sites in Tahlequah. We drove to the University and heard a great lecture about the Seminary school for women. They had a nice exhibit of family photos. We drove back to the city and saw a sign directing us to the Cherokee Cultural Center. We took the turn and that is where the people were. It was wall to wall packed with people. I was surprised by the dearth of Cherokee Freedmen. I was there for two days and did not run into any. I was met by a woman who took our ticket as we drove in to park. She made a comment about how much she liked my San Diego Cherokee T-shirt. When she realized I was from California, she asked me to do something to reign in my congresswoman. I politely smiled. D and I walked inside the compound and D went inside the museum. I was walking by myself and saw this really cute older couple sitting in their picnic chairs. They asked me how I was doing and invited me to socialize with them. I shared with them my history and how I was there to reconnect to my heritage. They were the nicest couple you ever want to meet, James and Anna Rooster.

As D and I were leaving we ran into Mike Ledger. He invited us to go with them to the Stomp. We followed him and his family to the sacred Cherokee grounds and there were several men gathered around a campfire in the hot sun. I was told that it was the tradition to fast all day before the Stomp which started at midnight. We waited for about an hour and then the men were invited to start the feast. They were followed by the men and then the women. What an interesting tradition that I was so fortunate to be able to experience. While there, I met some people and tossed around my family names, Beck, Davis and got no response. Then I asked if anyone knew any Drumgooles. One of the gentlemen who had been fasting had a sparkle in his eye and said that he was descended from Alexander Drumgoole. What a small world I said to myself, Alexander Drumgoole was the father of George Drumgoole. His name was Mike Stevens.

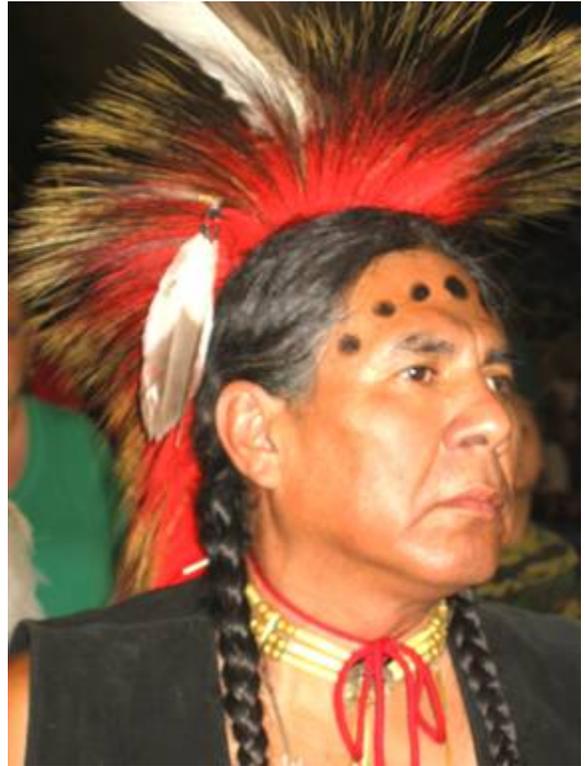
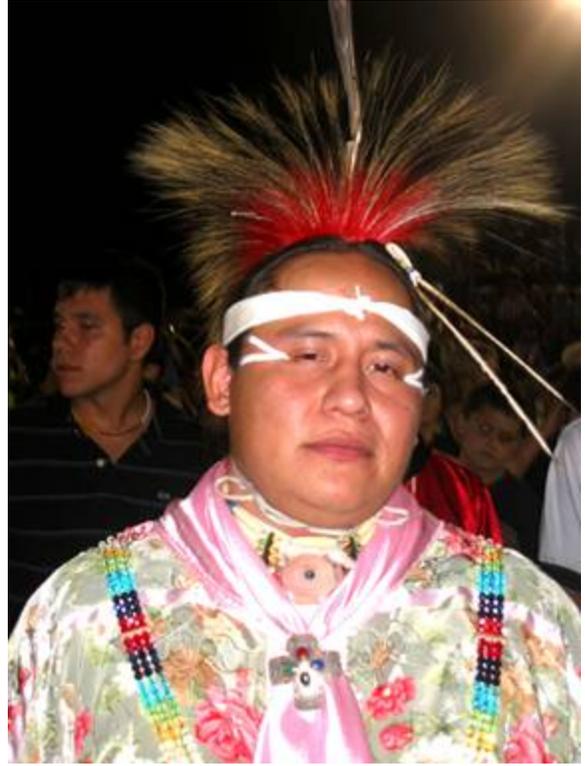
The highlight of my visit to the Cherokee Celebration was the Pow Wow Saturday night. There were literally thousands of people gathered on the field in Tahlequah, Oklahoma that warm summer night people moving in rhythm like a huge wave of colors, feathers and beads... I walked into the crowd of people....all the sudden the drums started playing and dancers started dancing to a tribal rhythm that connected them to their ancestral spirituality born in Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia and the Carolinas and transplanted to the plains of Oklahoma. It is a connection that awaking something buried inside me that brought me to the land of my forebears, Joe Davis, Benjamin Beck and George Drumgoole. It is a measure of the

Cherokee culture, their traditions, oral and written language, art, music, dance and their love of life.

The next day D and I drove to Vinita to do some more cemetery research. At the Fairview Cemetery in Vinita, we found the graves of Joe Davis, my great grandfather 1855 to 1911 and his two sons, Joe Davis Junior and Thomas Davis. What a find. We were there in June and walked all around the cemetery and did not see them.

I look forward to going back to Tahlequah next year.







Above Photos by Steve Spencer

Cherokee Nation Holiday, September 1-3



Seat of Honor

O'siyo. The Cherokee National Holiday celebration was recently held in Tahlequah, Oklahoma earlier this month. My wife and I had the privilege of attending the event for the first time. The small town of Tahlequah was "buzzing" with crowds of people in anticipation, a Parade, State of the Nation address by Chief Smith, an intertribal Pow Wow, and Stick ball game, Arts and Crafts fair, cultural demonstrations of early Cherokee life were among the many events to be seen and experienced. Through out all this excitement, one theme was readily apparent to me. The major purpose of the Holiday is to celebrate the signing of our Cherokee Constitution on September 6, 1839. Beyond that fact, the underlining theme was honor. Webster's ninth new collegiate dictionary defines honor as; "homage, reverence, deference meaning respect and esteem shown to another." The photo above is an empty chair with the Cherokee Nation flag draped upon it with a white rose. The chair symbolizes a seat of honor for our ancestors who have gone before us while the white rose represents the children of future generations.



Veterans honored at Cherokee Nation Holiday

Looking beyond the celebration events and sitting in the audience it was a time to be proud of your Cherokee heritage as our Cherokee Nation honored their ancestors, their children, veterans and members of other tribal nations as we all came together in celebration of this great Nation.



Miss Cherokee 2007-2008 Lindsay Glass of Kansas, Oklahoma

Looking forward to the future it is my hope that you will be able to join us next year at the 56th annual Cherokee Nation Holiday! Wado, Mike Ledger