

Decolonization and Indigenous Cultural Restoration

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“The Origins of Disease and Medicine” From the Cherokee Origin Epic

According to the Old Ones, long ago the humans and the animals got along fine. All the peoples, human and animal, could communicate with each other and lived in peace. The animals then were much larger than the animals of today. Indeed, it is said that the animals of today are but shadows of those who once were.

There came a time when we humans forgot our place and broke the harmony. Humans began to reproduce at an alarming rate, and we gave ourselves to the production of all sorts of weapons meant for the destruction of the animals: spears and atlatls, bows and arrows, blowguns and traps of all kinds. We began to hunt, not just for food, but simply for the fun of killing. We humans also killed many animals just by pure carelessness, never stopping to think of the results of our actions. Even as we walked from place to place, we were not careful where we stepped, so that many of the tiny many-legged and legless ones were crushed to death or maimed. Some humans went so far as to purposely kill little animals merely from a feeling of disgust or loathing, going out of their way to step on a bug or squash a harmless spider. It was clear that we humans believed ourselves to be the only ones who mattered in all of Creation, and as we continued clearing land and building our cities; it looked as if there would soon be no more room for anyone else to live in the Earth.

The animals came together in a joint council to discuss the human problem. The Grubworm presided at the council. After all, it was those he represented, the little creeping and crawling peoples of the Earth, who had suffered most from the actions of the humans. The animals all sat in a

circle. The talking stick was passed, giving each an opportunity to speak. The Toad said, "Something must be done. These humans despise me. They are forever kicking me or throwing things at me, because they think I am ugly. Just look at all the bumps they've put on my back!"

One of the little birds rose to say, "Although I am too small to provide much meat, their little boys kill my people and roast us over the fire until our feathers and feet are burned off." One after the other, the animals spoke of atrocities committed by the humans. The only one with nothing to say against the humans was the little chipmunk, who was too small to be hunted for food and too quick to be stepped on. When he spoke in defense of the humans, the other animals jumped on him and gave him such a scratching down his back that the stripes are there to this day!

Once it was established that something must be done about the humans in order to save the rest of Creation, the floor opened for discussion of what to do. It was finally decided that each of the animal peoples would come up with at least one disease with which to inflict the humans, in order to kill most of them and to teach the rest some respect. Various animals attending the council agreed to invent every sort of ailment from cancer to pre-menstrual syndrome. When the Grubworm heard of this last one, with its dire effects on both women and the men who share their homes, he laughed so hard he fell over backwards and has been crawling around on his back ever since.

So, all the animals went their separate ways to meet in council, each with their own kind, to work out the details of what they would do. The deer met in council, with their chief, Little Deer, presiding. The deer understood the humans to be a pitiful and needy people who live only by the deaths of others. For this reason, the deer decided to allow the humans to continue killing some deer each year, but only what is needed for food, NEVER FOR SPORT. Furthermore, a human hunter, upon killing a deer, is required to show respect for the spirit of the deer by asking the deer's pardon and making a proper tobacco offering. And so, Little Deer, the Chief and Adawehi of all the deer will come. Swiftly and invisibly he will come to the place where the deer has died. Gently he will bend down over the blood. In a whisper, he will ask the spirit of the slain deer, "Did this hunter treat you with respect? Did he ask your pardon? Did he offer tobacco?"

If the answer is, "Yes," all is well, and Little Deer will go on his way. But if the answer is, "No," Little Deer will track that hunter to his home. There, Little Deer will strike that hunter with crippling rheumatism, so that he may never hunt again!

Word was sent to the human people, and we Cherokees have not forgotten this treaty with the deer.

And so, many diseases came into the Earth. Many people died. For awhile, it looked as though maybe no humans would survive in the Earth. The great cities were forgotten and fell into ruin.

Seeing all of this, the plant peoples also gathered in council. Deciding to take pity on us humans, each plant agreed to give of itself to provide medicine for at least one human disease or ailment. All we humans have to do is ask in a respectful way.

Unity in Diversity

Jesus is quoted as praying for his followers, "...that they may be one as we are" (John 17:11b). Inasmuch as Creator is one, Creation is one; Creator and Creation are one. Here is one of the greatest truths: All is related; all is connected, the entirety of the universe, as one organism.

Here is another great truth which goes along with the first: Creator loves variety. Look at your body with all its diverse aspects working together. Look around you; look at all Creation. Everything is different, yet all works together in a wonderfully complex network of unity in diversity. That is what harmony is – unity in diversity. Harmony is Creator's pattern and design for Creation. Respect is essential to the restoration and preservation of harmony. How many even know the definition of respect anymore? To consider worthy of high regard *and* to refrain from interfering with: this is respect.

Cancer in the Body of Creation

What is cancer? To the best of my understanding, cancer basically consists of cells in a body that have forgotten some essential truths. Cancer is a community of cells that have forgotten that every cell in the body is connected – one with the whole body and worthy of respect. Cancer cells have forgotten that they are part of the body, not separate from the body and certainly not superior to the body. Seemingly, cancer cells actually want unity. However, failing to recognize unity in diversity as Creator's design, cancer cells work toward unity in uniformity. Cancer cells see Creator's harmonious design as chaos; they want to replace it with their own uniform design. So, the cancer sends out explorer cells to colonize every organ of the body, to turn it all into cancer, not realizing that this is the way of certain death. This is exactly what has happened and continues to happen among human beings in the Earth. Beginning 5,000 or so years ago with a few shortsighted human beings and malignantly spreading through the process of colonization, a human cancer has encircled the planet.

What's to be Done?

The usual treatment for cancer is to excise or otherwise destroy the cancerous cells. If that's the only way, we are all in trouble, for to one extent or another, we are all colonized, all either part of or to some extent entangled with the human cancer threatening the entirety of the Earth. The Earth may opt to

remove or destroy her human cancer suddenly and violently. This could be accomplished through pandemics such as in the ancient Cherokee story, or the explosive eruption of a single mega-volcano could provide a quick remedy for the imbalance. Maybe, *just* maybe, there is another way. Decolonization is the process of returning colonized people to a healthy/balanced state of indigenous relationship with Creator/Creation. I think that's what the animals and plants were trying to do in the ancient story, at least with the survivors of the pandemics. I think that's what Jesus was trying to do among his people. That is exactly what Mid American Indian Fellowships is attempting to do through its network of spiritual groups.

An important aspect of decolonization is the active and conscious decreasing of unhealthy or unbalanced dependencies. Now, there *is* such a thing as good dependency. Good dependencies are reciprocal in nature. Think of a circle. Everything naturally seeks to move in a circle; everything naturally seeks balance. Good, balanced, reciprocal dependencies may accurately be called interdependencies. This is the proper way to relate within our families, tribes, greater communities and with all creation. We are all connected; we need each other. But then there are bad dependencies, colonizing dependencies which may also be called co-dependencies. These are unbalanced dependencies in which balanced give-and-take cooperation is replaced by a competitive profit motive with resources taken from those who have less by those who have and want more and more and more. There is nothing wrong with selling something for what it is worth, for what you have in it, including a fair exchange for one's own labor. However, to make a profit is to sell something for more than it is worth. This is theft. It is cancer sucking the life from the body.

Wealthy colonizers like to portray themselves as leaders of society, illustrated by a pyramid model with themselves at the peak of the pyramid. A more realistic model may be visualized by turning the pyramid upside down and opening up what was once the bottom and has now become the top. We now have a funnel with the colonizers at the bottom. Have you ever seen an ant lion trap? The ant lion or doodle bug is the larva or nymph of the damsel fly. Ant lions build funnel-shaped traps in sandy soil. The fat ant lion lies hidden in the sand at the bottom of the trap with over-sized pinchers open and ready. When a hard-working ant stumbles into the trap, she slides quickly to the bottom to be devoured by the ant lion. What I am saying is that wealthy colonizers are not leaders in society, nor are they producers; they are those who have become nothing more-or-less than bottom feeders. And get this: When we take more resources than we need, we become cannibals. This is insanity of the most damaging and deadly variety. Through the process of decolonization we attempt to lessen the amount of resources that fall down the colonizers' trap, to keep ourselves from falling down this trap and especially to keep ourselves from joining the ranks of bottom-feeding, colonizing cannibals.

Colonizers try to convince us that we must have this and this and this and this: things no one ever needed. Planned obsolescence is a tool of modern colonizers – make it to wear out quickly and/or push a new and improved model

every year or so. Does this sound familiar? The constant desire for the newest and best leaves people constantly frustrated and never satisfied, with more and more resources falling down the colonizers' trap and more and more stuff discarded in landfills.

The pursuit of happiness is listed as an "inalienable right" in the United States Declaration of Independence. But just think about it: To pursue happiness is never to be happy. Incidentally, those drafting the Declaration of Independence probably equated the pursuit of happiness with the pursuit of property. Their primary beef with the British government had to do with a British plan to limit the colonists' "right" to steal Indian lands. The British government intended to build forts for the purpose of protecting Indian lands from colonial invasion, with financing to come from a tea-tax levied on the colonists. The colonists, or at least the rich colonists, the ones most involved with the theft of Indian lands and speculation on same, were very upset with this, and to demonstrate their displeasure and stir up the less wealthy colonists, they dressed as Indians and dumped the tea from the ships moored in Boston Harbor. Pursuit of property or wealth is certainly not the way to happiness. Having what we need (adequate shelter, clothing, water and food) we should be content. In the Cherokee language, happiness and thankfulness are the same thing; to be happy is to be thankful, and to be thankful is to be happy. There is nothing to pursue, just blessings to count. The pursuit of happiness/pursuit of property is the heart of the so-called "American Dream". It is the carrot-on-a-stick that causes Americans to tolerate the thefts of wealthy colonizers. There is an idea put in the back of every American's head that anyone and everyone can be rich. This ignores the reality that it takes many poor people to support every rich one. It takes more than hard work and thrift to be rich; it takes a willingness to take and hold more than you need, leaving others with less than they need. But, follow the American Dream, and you too may one day be a bottom feeder and a cannibal.

Do we really need credit cards? Credit card company lackeys posing as financial experts on TV news shows tell us we *must* have credit cards in order to develop and maintain good credit ratings. Surely there is a better way. Credit card companies exist for the purpose of funneling resources down the colonizers' trap, effectively enslaving the human population. Credit card companies buy our local judges, paying for their election campaigns to ensure preferential treatment when suing the judges' constituents. Credit card companies have ample resources to buy other politicians as well, at every level of government. Sadly, the credit card companies have devised a scheme whereby everyone must pay for their supposed "services", those who use credit cards *and* those who do not. By charging fees to merchants and vendors who accept credit cards (expenses passed on to customers' through higher prices) credit card companies effectively levy a tax on everyone. This truly *is* taxation without representation. Cash-back cards are the worst, since their fees are higher, enabling them to give back a bit of what they have stolen from you, your family and friends. Perhaps we should dress up as rich usurers and throw all the credit cards into Boston Harbor.

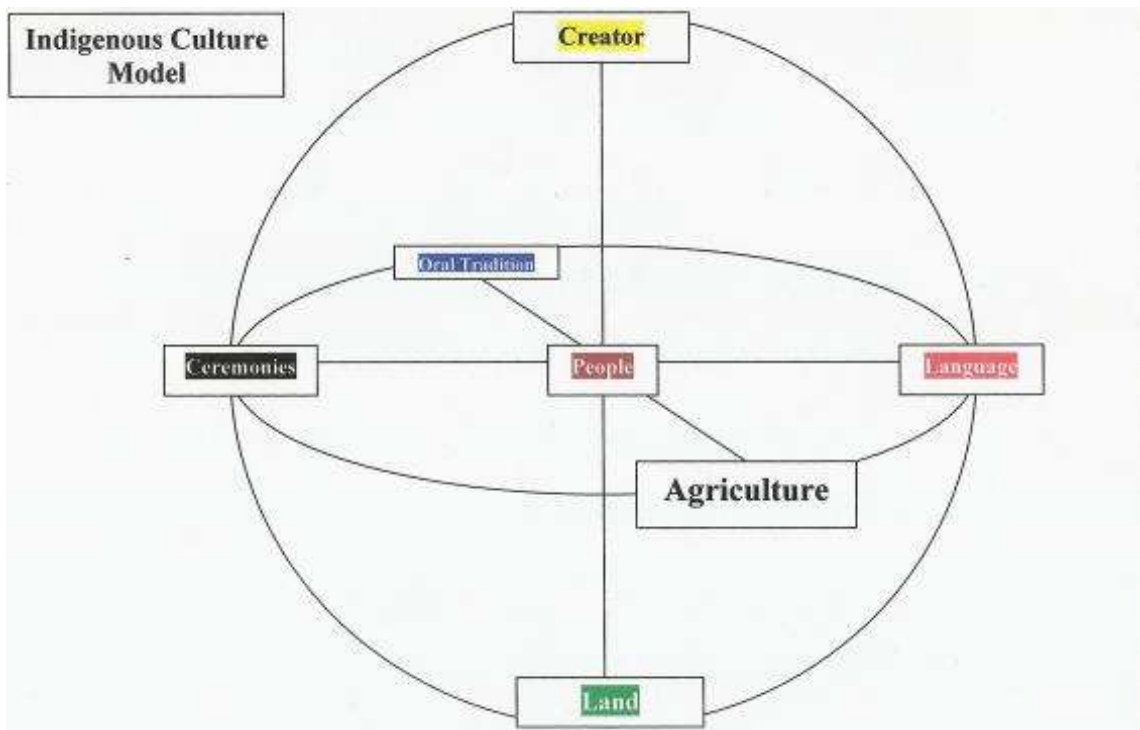
Ultimately, it is up to each person to decide. We have to weigh all these things out for ourselves. It is not my place to tell anyone what they must or must not do.

In any event, decolonization is not something that occurs instantaneously or overnight. Think of a young tree growing up through the cracked asphalt of an urban parking lot. That is not a good place for the tree to be, and the tree will eventually die if left where it is. However, to suddenly and forcefully uproot the tree or to uproot the tree without replanting will surely cause a quicker death. The roots of the tree must be carefully extracted from the unhealthy place and just as carefully replanted in good soil. Our people are like trees with roots deeply embedded and entangled within colonizing systems. Decolonization is an ongoing process beginning in awareness of the malignant nature of colonizing systems, leading to careful and conscious disentanglement from colonizing systems and culminating in the positive action of indigenous cultural restoration - replanting in good soil.

Four Aspects of Indigenous Culture: Agriculture, Language, Oral Tradition and Ceremonies

In order to have good soil into which to reroot, we must actively work to restore or rebuild and revitalize our indigenous cultures. Agriculture, Language, Oral Tradition and Ceremonies are aspects of every indigenous culture. They are not parts, they are aspects, each integrated so completely within all the others that if one is damaged or taken away, everything goes out of balance and spins crazily toward destruction. The rebuilding and revitalization of an indigenous culture must include the restoration of each of these essential aspects.

Before going on, I want to make it clear that I do not attach the same meaning to the word “culture” that is most often connected to the word by the average Christian preacher in a pulpit on a Sunday morning. Christian preachers frequently speak of “*the* culture” (as if there is only one) as a common collection of aberrant and godless human behaviors to be “engaged” or opposed or fought against. When I speak of a culture or, more specifically, of an indigenous culture, I am speaking of that which connects an indigenous people group with Creator, with the Land in which the people lives and with one another as a people. A culture is the totality of the observance and action of a people - the way a people senses what is sensed and the way a people does what is done. An indigenous culture is a gift from Creator and the Land to a people and a gift from the people to the Land and Creator. Imagine a great vertical wheel. Half the wheel is immersed in the Earth; the other half is reaching up into the Heavens, and the wheel is constantly turning with the people at the center. Now imagine another great horizontal wheel, again with the people at the center and turning from east to north to west to south and to east again - representative of the aspects of the sensing and doing of the people. The two wheels intersect and interact, a wheel within a wheel. This is a picture of an indigenous culture.



Is an indigenous culture without flaw? Certainly not. Nothing under the Sun is without flaw. However, an indigenous culture is fit or well suited and sustainable as well as adaptable to each new crisis and for each new generation..

I just want to make sure that I am not entirely misunderstood when I use the word culture, and having formally studied the English language I can assure you that my use of the word culture is very much in keeping with the word's original meaning.

Now I will return to the four aspects of an indigenous culture: Agriculture, Language, Oral Tradition and Ceremonies

Agriculture

Here is my own working definition of indigenous agriculture: Indigenous agriculture is the sum of the reciprocating, interdependent, cooperative relationships between humans, land, plants and animals. This includes, of course, growing crops and animal husbandry. However, it also includes hunting and fishing, the gathering of herbs and wild plants and the nurturing, harvesting and use of forest products such as nuts and fruits and, of course, wood for use as fuel and building material. Even as indigenous agriculture fosters interdependence between humans and the land, it also fosters healthy independence of indigenous people and interdependence between people as all or most people within a truly indigenous people group are involved in agriculture.

Agriculture is the basis of indigenous economy and foundational to indigenous spirituality. Indigenous agriculture is sustainable agriculture.

Simply put, agriculture is the foundation and heart of every indigenous culture. Separated from its indigenous agricultural traditions, an indigenous spirituality becomes disconnected religion based in rules and regulations and man-made theology sadly mistaken for deity. All that is left are empty, disconnected observances with little real meaning in the lives of the people. Put even more simply: Agriculture is where indigenous culture begins. Without agriculture there can be *no* culture. Restore indigenous agriculture and the rest may, in one way or another, eventually take care of itself. Fail to restore indigenous agriculture, practice other cultural aspects with no direct or personal involvement in agriculture, and the result is a cultural disconnect which may yield nothing but the growth of malignancy.

Chickamauga Cherokee spirituality is largely based in our relationships with Corn and Deer. To be connected agriculturally as a Chickamauga Cherokee means at least raising a bit of corn, beans, squash and other crops one's family eats, gathering some helper herbs in a good way and engaging in, at least, a bit of hunting. Raising, gathering, fishing and hunting for, at least some of what we eat, not only connects us spiritually to those helpers who give themselves that we may be in the Earth another day, it also serves to lessen dependency on a colonizing consumer economy.

As you look to connect agriculturally, do what you can where you are. Whether you live in a rural area or in a town or city, look for available land where you can raise a garden. If you live in an apartment, you may opt for patio plantings in large pots. Also, if you do not have or know others with land suitable for hunting or gathering, contact your state conservation department for listings and maps of public lands where such activities are allowed.

As you plan your garden, you might consider focusing on heirloom crop varieties, saving seed from year to year. You will not only save money on seed, reducing dependency on seed companies, but the crop varieties will grow stronger, tougher year to year, more adapted to the soil and climate where you live and better able to fight off insects and diseases on their own, with no help from chemical sprays. Save and plant seed from an heirloom variety for seven years, and that variety becomes a landrace of your garden. Also, ancient varieties of corn and beans, such as the Cherokee varieties we raise, are nutritionally far superior to modern varieties, and they taste better! Hybrid and genetically modified varieties of corn, beans, squash and other vegetables grown commercially and pushed by many seed companies are but forms and shadows of the real thing.

No one can raise, gather or make everything that is needed for the people to live. Indigenous cultural restoration must be a cooperative effort. It is good to learn and to teach, but no one person will ever be able to learn everything. It takes community. Is there something you raise or gather wild or know how to make and thereby have in abundance? Do you have excess crops or garden

produce? Are you skilled at sustainable methods of food preservation and storage? Do you hunt, fish or gather more of something than you can use? Do you raise livestock or poultry and have excess meat, milk or eggs? Are you skilled at home butchering or tanning hides and making leather? Are you experienced with horses? Can you make maple syrup? Do you know how to make a basket? Can you make soap or oil lamps? Do you weave or sew? Can you cut wood? Are you skilled at carpentry or blacksmithing? Do you know how to make simple farm implements or hunting bows? Are you adept in one or more methods of healing? Although there is nothing wrong with selling a product or service for a fair amount, there are great advantages to bartering and especially to giving away what we have in abundance. Bartering pretty much insures a fair exchange without further fattening and enabling wealthy colonizers and colonizing governments. Giving away our surplus is even better. To begin with, there are complex legalities involved in selling certain things but no problem with giving them away. Beyond that, giving builds community, and although honest love and generosity should always be the primary motives for giving, what you give *will* come back again, transformed into what you need, when you need it. This is the principle of reciprocity in action. It is far better than putting money in the bank! Our Chickamauga Cherokee people are widely scattered, as are those of many other tribes, especially those of us without reservations or communal land bases. Keep in mind, your community includes *all* the people around you, especially anyone, whatever their ancestry or ethnicity, who is seeking a healthy/balanced state of relationship with Creator/Creation. Study your history; it's the Chickamauga way. As much as is possible, get to know your neighbors. Treat them as relatives; they *are* relatives.

Language

An indigenous language is the soul of an indigenous culture. The indigenous languages of this land grew from or sprang from this land and from the experience of living in or as part of this land. Learning the basics of your own indigenous language helps you think in a different way or to express thoughts you already have as an indigenous person but cannot express in English. For instance, while English is a noun-based language that tends toward objectification, American Indian languages are verb based or action and relationship oriented. On page 284 of his book *The Condor and the Eagle*, Phillip H. Duran basically says that American Indian languages are more suitable than European languages for describing the fundamental processes of the cosmos, such as quantum physics, since American Indian languages reflect a deep knowledge of a living and dynamic (forever changing) Universe. In an e-mail discussion a few years ago from which I received permission to quote, Phil Duran said, "I think one healing aspect of language is the ability to identify more completely with who you are, giving you closer ties to your ancestors and your people. Native thought can thus flow together unobstructed with the language because the thoughts (worldview as part of culture) and the language were created to flow together--at least that's what I imagine."

Richard Zane Smith, who works toward cultural restoration among his own Wyandotte people says, “Restoration of culture without its language is impossible. They are inseparably linked and mutually dependent. One cannot exist without the other.” Richard advises taking “baby steps” toward language restoration or revitalization. I would add that when taking baby steps, it is important to get back up when one falls down. As baby steps continue, there will come a time when they will no longer be baby steps.

Restoration of language is difficult in places where the people are scattered, yet it is not impossible. I can truthfully say that, on the whole, our Chickamauga Cherokee people have more of our language now than we did 20 years ago. Regularly gathering together with others of your own people who value all aspects of your indigenous culture is essential to learning the language. Attending ceremonies and other events provides opportunities for learning songs in your own language and incorporating words and phrases to increase your vocabulary. As you learn more, formulating prayers in your own language is an effective way to practice.

There are several books available for learning the Cherokee language. I recommend the *Cherokee English/Cherokee Glossary* and the *Cherokee – English Dictionary*, both available from Various Indian Peoples Publishing Company in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. These are best used together. You will find more information about these books in the bibliography below.

Oral Tradition

Oral tradition is the mind of an indigenous culture. Oral tradition includes family stories as well as clan stories and tribal stories. There is also your own personal story. However, all the stories of the oral tradition become personal as you are telling them or hearing them. These stories are sacred. I’ve been taught that stories are true because of the truths they teach. Facts and details are never the main point. The main point is the one central truth or lesson of the story. Although some stories may be very old, they are timeless and never just about something that happened long ago. They are really about right now. The one telling the story and all those hearing the story are participants in the story. Details within stories may subtly change from generation to generation or from one story teller to the next, but the truth of the story remains the same.

Learn the stories of your own people. Put them in your heart; be able to tell them in your own words, and your worldview will change.

It is of the utmost importance that the stories remain orally transmitted. It is not called the “Oral Tradition” for nothing. Orally transmitted stories remain living or dynamic from generation to generation. Some people think of tradition and dogmatism as the same thing. From my perspective, these are radically different. Tradition is that which is handed down by our ancestors and becomes new in us, in each generation, as it speaks to each new crisis. Tradition is living/dynamic. Dogmatism is static/dead. Writing may well preserve the stories, and as you know, I am one of those involved in writing down the stories. However, I see that there are risks involved. We must be mindful of those risks.

There is a danger that as a story is written, it may cease to live within the oral tradition. It may become static or dead as the focus shifts from the eternal truth or lesson of the story to the details of the story. Someone may hear the story and say, "Oh, you told that story all wrong. I have the correct version here in my book; let me read it to you." Another danger is that people of other cultures may take stories completely out of context and thereby misuse them. You may read stories of your own people from a book. That's alright, but don't just read the story. Take the story deep inside you. Let it become part of you, as it was meant to be. When you can tell that story in your own words as called upon to do so, that story will have reclaimed its rightful place in the oral tradition of your family and your people.

Ceremonies

Ceremonies are the life or vitality of an indigenous culture. By nature, ceremonies are participatory. Ceremonies cannot be learned from a book, as they teach what is beyond the ability of language to describe. While there is great power in the enactment of ceremonies, the purpose is never individual power, but rather that the people may live and continue as a people in the Earth and that the cycles of Creation may continue in balance. Every tribe, every people has their own ceremonies. Even the animals have ceremonies. Have you watched the birds courting? Each species has its own dance, and each type of bird builds its nest a certain way. Apart from the birds, other animals have their own ceremonies as well. I will go so far as to say that all Creation, the entire Universe, is singing and dancing in circles together. But getting back to the ceremonies of various human cultures – there is much diversity, which I think, is as it should be. While one should be respectful of the wonderfully diverse ways of all peoples, it is important to participate in your own people's ceremonies. With whom you participate in ceremony is a major identity factor. This has not changed since the old days. Chickamauga Cherokees are a people of the Fire. Our annual ceremonies center on the Sacred Fire as a visible and experiential connection of the people with the entirety of Creator/Creation. It is also understood that each person has the Sacred Fire burning in the heart, connecting all aspects of Creation as one.

The ceremonial days of a people are the holidays of that people. So, what is the most important Cherokee holiday? Contrary to popular belief, it is not Labor Day. By watching many Cherokees, you might think the most important Cherokee holiday is Christmas, but no, Christmas is not a traditional *Cherokee* holiday. If you ask the average Christian, "What is the most important Christian holiday?" The answer will likely be "Christmas". However, a Christian minister will most likely say "Easter". I once asked a Jewish friend, "What is the most important Jewish holiday?"

"Well, it certainly isn't Chanukkah?" he said. "Most Americans seem to think that's the most important Jewish holiday, but it's not even close."

"I wasn't thinking of Chanukkah," I replied. "I was thinking more along the lines of Yom Kipper, your Day of Atonement."

"You're close," he observed, "but no cigar. Yom Kipper is maybe the most holy of the annual Jewish holidays, but it's not the most important Jewish holiday. The most important Jewish holiday is Shabbat, what Christians mispronounce as "Sabbath".

But, what is the most important Cherokee holiday? Among our Chickamauga Cherokee people who still keep the annual ceremonies, some might say, "The New Fire Ceremony." After all, this is the Solar New Year as well as the birthday of the Sacred Fire. Others might say, "The Great New Moon." That's the Lunar New Year and a commemoration of Creation itself. Both of these are very important ceremonies as are all the annual ceremonies. However, in my opinion, for what it's worth, the most important Cherokee holiday is Today. This day, every day is the most important day – the most important ceremonial day of all. Each day should be commemorated with ceremony: Going to Water and Greeting the Sun – offering Tobacco, being reminded that we are part of Creation, part of the Earth, part of all that is, living the day, enjoying the day, celebrating the day as the most important day of all. Going out at night to gaze at the stars, we see we don't have to travel to space or journey to heaven; we are already there! It is all right here! Focus on today not on tomorrow. Focus on now and on what you are doing now, not on the next thing. This helps eliminate worry; let tomorrow worry about itself. So, should we not make plans? It is often said, "To fail to plan is to plan to fail". Make plans but remember life seldom, if ever goes according to plan. Let your plans be flexible.

Prayer is ceremony, and ceremony is prayer. When you pray, watch and listen, as these are the most important aspects of prayer. Thanksgiving is very important. In the Cherokee language thanksgiving and joy are the same thing. To be thankful is to be joyful. To be overjoyed is to be overwhelmed with gratitude. Pray for others not for self. For yourself, pray only for wisdom and courage to make it through Today. Praying for others takes the focus off of self. This also helps eliminate worry. How specific do our prayers need to be? That depends . Are we in partnership with Creator or Creator's master? My prayers are pretty unspecific unless I am instructed by Creator to be more specific. I trust Creator to be the best judge of specifics.

Today, each day, is the most important Cherokee holiday. But we should not neglect the other holidays of our people, the annual ceremonies for which the people gather as a people.

Some say ceremonies are mere symbolism. I say ceremonies are real experiences. In ceremony we participate in the song and dance and prayer and movement of all that is. In ceremony we come to understand our place in Creation, our interdependence and relatedness. There is great healing in ceremony, healing for the person, healing for the people, healing for the Earth, healing for all Creation. It could well be that through instructions given to human

communities, in some mysterious way, Creator communicates with the spiritual entities of the Universe. It could be that, in very real ways, the ceremonies actually do make the world go round.

Within most indigenous ceremonies, some measure of sacrifice is present. It may be as simple as missing a few meals, or it may be something else. The sacrifice is not looked upon as payment for sin, but as some small measure of giving back – reciprocating. What do I own that I may give? My own body? My own blood? I don't even own these. These belong to Creator; these belong to the people. The one suffering in a ceremony is saying, "I give myself that the people may live" or, "I give myself for all the relatives and all the relations." It is understood that the giving of oneself is not confined to the suffering experienced in the ceremony; one's whole life is given that the people may live. In this life, you *will* suffer and you *will* die, yet there is no dishonor. Creator and Creator-Offspring grant honor to suffering and profound and mysterious meaning even to death. However, I would not want anyone to get the idea that indigenous ceremonies are just about sacrifice. Indigenous ceremonies are also characterized by celebration. At the end of every fast, there is a feast.

Conclusion

How do you see it? What will you do? How far are you willing to go to heal yourself, your people and the Earth from the cancer and insanity of colonization? Do you want to be free? Do you want to be happy? Let your wants be few, and let your focus and identity be with the people, with the Earth in all her aspects, with Creation/Creator - the entirety of the Universe of which you are an integral part. When we stop pursuing happiness we can be happy now, content with the true necessities of life instead of selling our souls for all the stuff the bottom-feeding cannibals use as bait for their traps. We can courageously work to lessen co-dependencies that we may live lives characterized by balanced interdependencies - lives of thanksgiving and joy.

Decolonization and indigenous cultural restoration are interconnected and inseparable. When the roots of a tree are disentangled from an unhealthy place, the tree must be replanted in good soil. While decolonization is resistance to colonizing powers, indigenous cultural restoration is a cooperative effort. We need each other. No one can do everything; everyone can do something. What can you do?

Engaging ourselves in our own indigenous agricultural practices, immersing ourselves in our own indigenous language, internalizing the sacred stories of our own indigenous oral tradition, regularly gathering together for the indigenous ceremonies of our own people - singing ourselves together as a people and also making each day a sacred ceremony, we learn to live respectful and loving lives. We experience life lived for the people, life characterized by light footprints and nurture rather than exploitation. As I have said before, it is up to each person to decide. We have to weigh all these things out for ourselves.

Selected Bibliography for our people seeking decolonization and indigenous cultural restoration

Provided by Robert Francis at the 12th Annual Mid American Indian Fellowships Gathering, Linn County Park, Linn County, KS, September 20, 21 and 22, 2013.

Cherokee English/Cherokee Glossary, Various Indian Peoples Publishing Co. 2004. Updated 2005. This book allows you to look up 9,455 English words and find the nearest Cherokee equivalents. Is best used in conjunction with the *Cherokee – English Dictionary* listed below.

Cherokee – English Dictionary by Durbin Feeling, edited by William Pulte, in collaboration with Agnes Cowen and The Dictionary Committee, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma 1975. Is best used in conjunction with the *Cherokee English/Cherokee Glossary* listed above. While both these books could stand some improvement/revision, they are the best language helps for those learning Cherokee I have found so far. Both books are available from Various Indian Peoples Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1540, Tahlequah, OK 74465 (800) 776-0842 www.nativelanguages.com

The Cherokee People by Thomas E. Mails, Marlowe & Company 1996. This book gives a somewhat accurate overview of Cherokee history and ceremonies. There are a few glaring errors, such as the Seven-Sided rather than Eight-Sided Council House diagram.

Cherokee Proud: A Guide for Tracing and Honoring Your Cherokee Ancestors by Tony Mack McClure, Chu-Nan-Nee Books 1998. This is an excellent guide for understanding the process of tracing Cherokee genealogy.

The Cherokee Sacred Calendar by Raven Hail, Destiny Books 2000. While, in my opinion, the author tends to occasionally get a little far afield, this book provides information on the Cherokee Calendar and will help you find your Cherokee Natal Day.

Columbus and Other Cannibals by Jack D. Forbes, Latest Edition by Seven Stories Press 2008. This book identifies “a disease worse than leprosy, a sickness worse than malaria, a malady much more terrible than smallpox.... the greatest epidemic sickness known to man”.

The Condor and the Eagle: Uniting Heart and Mind in Search of a New Science Worldview by Phillip H. Duran, Eaglehouse Publications 2013. Writing from the perspective of a Tigua Indian and a physicist, Phil Duran demonstrates how Western Science, specifically within the field of modern physics, has within the past century or so “discovered” many principles always known to indigenous people, such as the living, sentient nature of the Universe and the connectedness/relatedness/oneness of all that is.

1491: *New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* by Charles C. Mann, Alfred A. Knopf publisher 2005. What was it like to live here before the European invasions? Archaeologists and historians are finally coming around to agree with our own indigenous oral traditions. Another book by Charles C. Mann is **1493: *Uncovering the New World Columbus Created***.

Guests by Michael Doris, Scholastic Inc. 1996. This book for young readers offers insight into identity issues as well as an American Indian perspective on the so-called “First Thanksgiving”.

History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees by James Mooney, originally published as separate works *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (1891) and *Myths of the Cherokees* (1900) by the Bureau of American Ethnology, published by Bright Mountain Books 1992, reproduced by Cherokee Publications 2006. While containing inaccuracies (especially Mooney's unfounded population estimates) and multiple examples of Eurocentric thinking, every person of Cherokee descent should read this book.

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James W. Loewen, The New Press 1995. This book provides a critique of the most popular U.S. history textbooks used in American schools and provides a well-researched and documented outline of U.S. history. ***Lies Across America*** is another good book by Loewen.

Living Stories of the Cherokee collected and edited by Barbara R. Duncan, University of NC Press 1998. While providing an overview of Cherokee oral tradition, this book is a great help to those seeking to understand the complex nature of oral traditions in general.

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie, Harper Perennial 1994. Other books by Sherman Alexie also recommended: ***Reservation Blues***, ***Indian Killer***, ***The Toughest Indian In The World***. Alexie is a very insightful author, exploring many complex issues affecting American Indians and others, most always with humor.

Medicine of the Cherokee: The Way of Right Relationship by J.T. Garrett and Michael Tlanusta Garrett, Bear & Company 1996. This is a good, basic indigenous medicine book.

Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America by Eva Marie Garrouette, University of California Press 2003.

Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom by Marilou Awiakta, Fulcrum Publishing 1993. This is a great overview of the Cherokee oral tradition applied to 20th century events.

Unlearning the Language of Conquest: Scholars Expose Anti-Indianism in America edited by Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs), University of Texas Press 2006.

The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture by Wendell Berry, Third Edition by Sierra Club Books 1996.

Take everything you read in books with a grain of salt.

A Few Sources for Books

Cherokee Publications, PO Box 430, Cherokee, NC 28719, CPubl@aol.com
www.cherokeepublications.net . Write to them and ask for a catalog.

Drumbeat Indian Arts, Inc., 4143 North 16th Street, Suite 1, Phoenix, Arizona 85016-5317. Write to them and ask for their books, music and craft supplies mailing list.

Various Indian Peoples Publishing Company, PO Box 1540, Tahlequah, OK 74465. Write and ask for an American Indian Languages Catalog.

Amazon.com has most books available, many of them used and for very reasonable prices.

Sources for Heirloom Seeds:

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, 2278 Baker Creek Rd., Mansfield, MO 65704 (417) 924-8917 www.rareseeds.com Baker Creek has Cherokee Trail of Tears Beans. For the most part, we no longer recommend Baker Creek as we have gotten mixed seed from them on several occasions.

Pinetree Garden Seeds & Accessories, P.O. Box 300, New Gloucester, ME 04260 (207) 926-3400 www.superseeds.com

Sand Hill Preservation Center, Calamus, IA 52729 (563) 246-2299 sandhill@fbcom.net www.sandhillpreservation.com Sand Hill has several varieties of old Cherokee tomatoes as well as many good squash, bean and corn varieties. They also sell heritage poultry varieties.

Seed Savers Exchange, 3094 North Winn Rd, Decorah, IA 52101 (563) 382-5990 www.seedsavers.org

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, PO Box 460, Mineral, VA 23117 www.southernexposure.com

For seeds of Cherokee Blue Eagle Corn, Cherokee White Flint Corn, Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn and the Daksi Grounds Landrace of Cherokee Old Tobacco, contact Robert and Janet Francis, RR 1 Box 194A , Butler, MO 64730 (660) 679-4014 maif77@earthlink.net

Heritage Poultry and Poultry Supplies:

Cackle Hatchery, PO Box 529, Lebanon, MO 65536 (417) 532-4581 cacklehatchery@cacklehatchery.com www.cacklehatchery.com

Meyer Hatchery, 626 St. Rt. 89, Polk, OH 44866 (888) 568-9755 www.meyerhatchery.com

Sand Hill Preservation Center, Calamus, IA 52729 (563) 246-2299 sandhill@fbcom.net www.sandhillpreservation.com They also sell heirloom seeds and plants.

Stromberg's Chicks & Game Birds Unlimited, PO Box 400, Pine River, MN 56474 (800) 720-1134 www.strombergsschickens.com

Goat Supplies

Caprine Supply, PO Box Y, DeSoto, KS 66018 (800) 648-7736 www.caprinesupply.com They have veterinary medicines.

Hoegger Supply Company, Inc., 160 Providence Rd., Fayetteville, GA 30215 (800) 221-4628 www.thegoatstore.com This is a good source for goat milking supplies.

For old fashioned, tried and true farm and home supplies and non-electric machines and appliances, get the Lehman's catalog.

Lehman's, PO Box 270, Kidron, OH 44636 (877) 438-5346 www.lehmans.com