

# The Cherokee



## Social Organization:

Clans were a dominating factor in Cherokee society serving both a social and political function. The clans were matrilineal, meaning through the mother's line. The Cherokee had seven clans, Long Hair, Blue, Wolf, Wild Potato, Deer, Bird and Paint. You belong to your mother's clan, and everyone within the clan was considered to be your blood relative. You could not marry someone of your own clan. Men were responsible for hunting and protecting the community as warriors. Women were responsible for farming, taking care of the household and family. Women owned the farms and the homes.

When a Cherokee couple married they moved into the women's house. Children were educated not by their fathers, who were of a different clans, but by their mother's brother.

## Clothing:

In the summer months Cherokee men wore only breech cloths and leggings, in the winter months they added shirts or vests. Cherokee men shaved their head except for the scalp lock to which they could attach a porcupine roach. They also practiced tattooing and they painted their bodies for war. Cherokee women in the summer would wear wrap around skirts. In the winter they would wear poncho style blouses and skirts. They wore their hair long unless in mourning. Children, until the age of 12 years would not wear clothing in the summer months.

The Cherokee people quickly adapted their style of clothing upon the arrival of the Europeans. Today their traditional clothing style consists of Ribbon Shirts for men and Tear dresses for women.

## Homes and Villages:

The Cherokee lived in permanent villages of 30 to 60 households. Most towns were surrounded by a stockade. All towns had a council house, in which the sacred fire was kept burning. The council house could hold as many as 500 people and was used for political and ceremonial purposes. There were two types of houses that could be used; a wattle and daub house partially sunk into the ground or a log cabin.

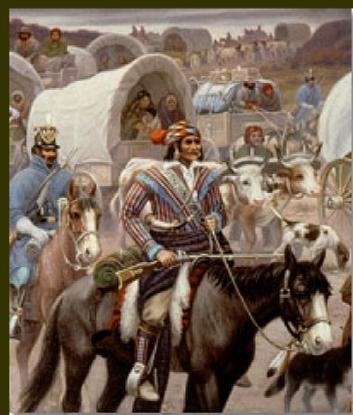
## Political Organization:

The Clan was the most important aspect of Cherokee political organization. It was the clan, which were controlled by the women of the village that determined the Chiefs. Each town had a peace and war chief with councils for each. Cherokee believed that acculturation to the European lifestyle was the best means of survival. They invited religious missionaries into the nation to develop schools. Sequoyah developed the written Cherokee language. The Cherokee became the first tribe to have its own newspaper, The Cherokee Phoenix, which was printed in both English and Cherokee. They also formed a constitutional government.

## Religion and Ceremonies:

The numbers four and seven play an important role in the ceremonies of the Cherokee. The number four represents all the familiar forces, also represented in the four cardinal directions. The number seven represents the seven clans of the Cherokee, and are also associated with directions. In addition to the four cardinal directions, three others exist. Up (the Upper World), down (the Lower World) and center (where one lives and always is). Also held sacred are circles and water. The everyday cultural world of the Cherokee includes spiritual beings. Even though the beings are different from people and animals, they are not considered "supernatural", but are very much a part of the natural, real world. Very basic to the Cherokee belief system is and evil is punished.

overseen by highly trained People. There were six main before the forced removal; (March), Green Corn Green Corn Ceremony(45 New Moon Festival (October), during the winter.



the premise that good is rewarded Cherokee religion and medicine is individuals known as Medicine festivals of religious observances the First New Moon of Spring Ceremony (June/July), Mature day after Green Corn), the Great and the sixth festival was held

