

Cherokee, NC

Cherokee Chamber of Commerce
1148 Tsali Blvd.



Oconaluftee Indian Village
Unto These Hills
Mountainside Theater

Cherokee Chamber of Commerce

US 19 to
Kittuwah Mound
& Bryson City

Downtown Cherokee

To Maggie Valley
& Ghost Town

Cherokee Chamber of Commerce
1148 Tsali Blvd.
P.O. Box 1838
Cherokee, NC 28719
877-433-6700



Special Thanks To the Cherokee
Preservation Foundation for funding

US 74 West to Bryson City
Smoky Mt. Railroad Depot

US 74 East
to Dillsboro



"Road to SoCo" by Rowana Stamper



Smoky Mt Expressway

Cherokee Bears and Their Artists



Language Bear
Billie Jo Rich



Winter Bear
Jeannine Hornbuckle



Trail of Tears and Clans Bear
Mario Esquivel



Out of Hiber-Nation Bear
Niki Nations



Patriot Bear
William Harris



Fair Bear
Marina Robbins



Pottery Bear
Melissa Maney



Sequoyah Bear
Charles Saunooke



Cherokee Sunset Bear
Joel Queen



Fish Bear
Faren Sanders Crews



Legendary Sunrise
Helen Martin



Eagle Dancer Bear
Laura Powell



Legends Bear
Henrietta Lambert



Forefathers Bear
Tim Chiltoskie



Bear on the Little Tennessee
Jeannine Hornbuckle



Harmony of Life Bear
Niki Nations



Big Cove Bear
Mario Esquivel



Children's Mixed Bear
Cherokee Youth Center



Tourist Bear
Charles Saunooke

Cherokee Transit Route



Cherokee Transit
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Transit
PO Box 455
Cherokee, North Carolina 28719
828-497-5296 • Toll-free 866-388-0071



Cherokee Bear Facts

by Dr. R. Michael Abram, Cherokee Heritage Museum and Gallery, Saunooke Village

- The word for bear in the Cherokee language is YONA or YONV.
- Bears originated from the transformation of Cherokee people (who fasted for 7 days) belonging to the Ani-Tsaguih Clan when they discovered that food was more plentiful in the forest than what grew in their gardens.
- The first fire started on an island in a hollow area of the ground. All the animals wanted it. The bear failed in his attempt to get the fire because he got badly burned and turned black..
- The chief of all bears is White Bear who lives in a townhouse under Mulberry Place Mountain located in the Great Smoky Mountains near Clingman's Dome.
- All bears can make themselves invisible to the hunter by lying on their backs and pointing the soles of their feet skyward.
- The first bear's taught the Cherokee their bear songs. The hunters used these songs in calling the bears, who then came and gave up their flesh for food.
- A bear hunter wore a bear mask and skin as a decoy in order to get a closer shot.
- Traditionally the Cherokee carved a bear mask from buckeye wood, then stained it with walnut bark dye and painted the eyeholes red.
- If a hunter wounded a bear, it could heal itself by going into the magic lake's purple (yellowish) water located in the Great Smoky Mountains near Mulberry Place.
- Hunters killed bears for their meat but even more so for their fat.
- Cooks used bear oil (extracted from the fat) as a sauce, condiment, soup, or to fry foods.
- Bowyers produced some bow strings from twisting bear entrails and they kept their bow supple with bear grease.
- Women put bear oil on their hair, then scattered in yellow and red dust before tying it into a club or knot on their crown.
- To prevent infection when a young man cut and stretched or pierced their ears he applied a mixture of buffalo wool and bear oil to his ears.
- Warriors rubbed bear oil on their bodies when they received a higher rank.
- Sometimes warriors tricked their enemy by walking with bear paws on their feet.
- Bear furs and/or skins served as bedclothes, hunting clothes, shoes, and leggings during the winter.
- Weavers made some cloth from dyed bear hair spun into thread.
- Traditionally the Cherokee performed the bear dance only during the winter.
- The bear symbolizes great strength.