

The Cherokee Trail of Tears

No visit to the Smokey Mountains would be complete without mentally traveling back 11,000 years to savor the history of the Cherokee people who have lived in Western North Carolina for that many years. Their inclination to peace and harmony and devotion to the balance of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of life have kept their culture alive to this very day.

Their villages were built on democratic principles (which thrilled the hearts of the Adlerians who visited this day). Adlerians believe that democracy is a respectful and useful way to run a family, a classroom, a state, a country, etc. etc. The Cherokee people guided their children with instructive stories rather than force—another Adlerian principle which was welcomed by the visitors.

The tragic story of the treatment of the Cherokee people was portrayed for the travelers by young actors in the famous “Trail of Tears” performance in a beautiful mountainside amphitheater.

Listening to the song of the chick-a-dee, enjoying a box lunch

from the top row of seats in the amphitheatre was a sharp contrast to the sadness of the story.

Settlers move nearer and nearer the Cherokee land. In 1838 the US Government wanted Cherokee land. In spite of many efforts to negotiate peace by Chief Junaluska, the Cherokee were forced to march to Oklahoma to be resettled. Nearly half of the 16,000 Cherokee people who began this trail of tears died of exposure, disease and the horror of exile. Thankfully, for the Cherokee heritage, a small number hid in the hills and some actually returned on foot and reestablished a sovereign nation of 100 square miles.

The travelers experienced the culture of our closest Native American's daily life in the 1750's. A self guided tour of the Oconaluftee Indian Village revealed arrow head "knappers," blowgun shooters, canoe burners, and potters. Finally in the seven-sided Council House, the sacred fire burns and genuine democracy prevails. The adults speak one at a time without

interruption and the others listen will full attention. This is the Cherokee way. It is also the Adlerian way, full of respect and honor for the others.