The Seven Cherokee Clans

THE BIRD CLAN (a – ni – tsi – s – kwa )

Members of the bird clan were the guardians of all the birds in the forest. They studied the habits of the birds of prey and tried to emulate them in their hunting methods. They also gathered and were keepers of feathers, which were considered to be sacred and were used in tribal ceremonies.

Because of the power and swiftness of a bird in flight, members of the Bird Clan were called upon to be messengers.

THE DEER CLAN ( a – ni – ka – wi )

Members of the Deer Clan were guardians of the deer in the forest. They made sure that when a deer was killed by a hunting party, its spirit was properly respected because it had given its life to feed a family. An offering of tobacco scattered in the four directions was made to the deer’s spirit for its help in nourishing the people.

They were also known throughout the entire villages for being the best hunters and the fastest runners and were often called upon to be messengers.

THE WOLF CLAN (a - ni – wa - ya )

The members of the Wolf Clan were known for their strength and prowess as warriors. They were the largest clan and held much prestige within the village. Most of the War Chiefs came from the Wolf Clan.

The Wolf Clan were the guardians of the wolf and revered its strength in its environment. Members of the Wolf Clan were the only clan who could kill a wolf.

THE BLUE CLAN (a – ni – sa – ho – ni )

Members of the Blue Clan were known for the strength of their medicine. They were the gatherers of a special plant that made a blue colored medicine that was used to help keep the children of the village well and separate from sickness. Blue Clan members were highly valued for this medicinal skill, for the children of a Cherokee village were highly valued.

THE LONG HAIR CLAN (a – ni – gi – lo – hi )
Members of the Long Hair Clan were known for their vanity and their beautiful long hair. This clan was also called the Twister Clan. Possibly because they wore their hair in elaborate hair styles and walked around the village proudly twisting their shoulders.

The Peace Chief was usually chosen from this clan and wore a long white feather robe.

THE PAINT CLAN (a – ni – wo – di )

Members of the Paint Clan were known for their ability as sorcerers and as medicine people. They were highly revered and were powerful conjurers.

They were also naturalists who knew and respected all the life forces that existed in nature, and they were makers of the red paint used in war and other important ceremonies.

THE WILD POTATO CLAN (a – ni – ga – to – gi – we )

The members of the Wild Potato Clan were known as excellent food gatherers. They forged the forest for the natural food sources such as nuts, berries, and edible plants. They were known for their skill in digging the tubers of the wild potato plant, which they pounded to make flour, used for bread.