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HISTORY OF CHEROKEE CENTRAL SCHOOLS
August 7, 2009

As early as 1804, Moravian Missionaries operated a school for Cherokee students at Spring Place in Georgia. By 1831, three missionaries were operating 11 schools in Cherokee County.

Cherokee formal education came to a standstill during the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma Territory in 1838. However, the Cherokee were so interested in the education of their children that they started a school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma as soon they were settled. They established The Women’s Seminary.

Col. Will Thomas tried to start Qualla Town Academy for Cherokee Students in the late 1800's, but this effort was cut short by the Civil War. During the 1800's a school was operated by the Quakers through a contract.

From 1890 until 1954, the U.S. Indian Service (later renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs) operated the Cherokee Boarding Schools at Cherokee. Eventually there were elementary day schools at Big Cove, Soco, Birdtown and Snowbird.

The Boarding School was closed in June of 1954. In 1962, the community day schools were closed, and a central elementary school opened in Cherokee.

In May 1975, the seniors graduated in the new Cherokee High School and in August of 1975, grades seven through twelve started their new school in the new facility.

On August 1, 1990, Cherokee Central Schools became a tribally operated school. The Tribal Council authorized the Cherokee School Board to operate the schools under a P.L. 100-297 Grant from the BIA Department of Education.

Today, we have approximately 1,300 students in grades K-12. The schools are accredited by the BIA, the State of North Carolina, and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In 1988 the Cherokee Award of Excellence, an honor earned by approximately 200 schools in the entire United States. In 1989, the Cherokee High School earned the same honor. The schools provide and at the same time, maintain our proud and sacred Indian heritage.

Fall of 1996, Cherokee School System established Kituwah curriculum for grades K-6.

After years of determination, patience, and hard work, the Ravensford Tract once again became Tribal property for the third time, having come full circle after 166 years. The Tribe gave the National Park Service a larger tract of land joining the Blue Ridge Parkway in exchange for the Ravensford Tract.
Partners in Education
Cherokee Central Schools and Cherokee Boys Club

The partnership between Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) and Cherokee Boys Club (CBC) actually began in 1932 when the Cherokee Boys Farm Club was established at the Cherokee Indian Boarding School. The Boarding school closed in 1954 and continued as a Day School and in 1964 the tribe incorporated The Cherokee Boys Club as a non profit tribal entity. Over the past 50 years, the partnership has remained true to course due to the Boys Club’s chief administrator remaining in that position.

In 1990, CCS became a tribally operated school system authorized by Public Law 100-297 and receives funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) through a grant process. The Cherokee Central Schools Board, composed of elected representatives from six communities including Big Cove, Big Y, Birdtown, Painttown, Wolftown, and Yellow Hill, is responsible for establishing system policies and for approving procedures for implementation of those policies. The School Board approves the system budget and assures that all federal, state, and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools’ (SACS) accreditation standards are met. A tribal council member serves on the CCS Board as liaison between tribal council and the school board.

The CBC is the fiscal agent for the Cherokee Central Schools. Since August 1, 1990, the CBC has provided financial administration for the School system. Included in the funds that are financially administered by the Cherokee Boys Club are Title I, Special Education (including preschool, handicapped, and talented and gifted students), Title V, Custodial Services, Transportation, and USDA funds. The BIE grant includes funding for operations and maintenance of education buildings and grounds. Student transportation and food service operations are provided by CBC under an agreement with the School Board. Services provided are at cost or are donated at no cost to the school.

The Cherokee Boys Club’s status as a non-profit entity allows the school system to receive funding for special startup programs. Grants from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, NC Arts Council, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, Harrah’s Casino and Hotel Fund, NASA , to name a few, are administered by CBC. These grants provide funding to the school system for implementation of new programs or for the purchase of new equipment. These programs focus on preparing students for the 21st century workforce.

The largest project that CBC has administered for the School Board is the construction of three new schools on the Ravensford Campus. Without tribal leadership and the generous financial support of tribal council, the schools would not have become a reality.

Both CCS and CBC are focused on and committed to quality education for Cherokee youth. With CBC focusing on operations and maintenance and fiscal management for the School, the CCS School Board and its staff have been able to focus on building new state of the art schools and developing stronger academic and athletic programs for Cherokee students.
General Information
- The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits all three schools.
- Teachers follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- The school system follows the NC Testing program for grades K-8, End of Course, and Career Technical Education courses.
- Teachers implement a Balanced Literacy approach to the teaching of English Language Arts, PK-12.
- Teachers utilize manipulatives and real world applications for math instruction, PK-12.
- Twenty-first Century Skills are taught and modeled in all areas.
- Writing Across the Curriculum is integrated across all curriculum areas.
- Exceptional Education Services
- Gifted and Talented (Horizons) Services
- Music programs
- Sacred Path for students and staff
- Faculty is 100% highly qualified (HQ).

Elementary School
- Teachers implement the K-2 assessment in the primary grades.
- Healthy Living curriculum
- Super Saturday and Super Science Saturday opportunities
- Science Fair
- Morning and after school reading enrichment and skill building opportunities

Cultural Program
- Immersion program, PK-8
- Cherokee culture is integrated in all curriculum areas.
- Developed Cherokee Language and History standards.
- Traditional student singers and dancers and traditional staff singers
- Night of Cherokee
- Cultural Heritage week
- Honoring our Grandparents and Honoring our Elders

Middle School
- Single-gender instruction
- Gear Up
- NASA school
- Collaboration with the Great Smoky Mountains National Parks Rangers
- Robotics
- Burroughs Wellcome CSI Summer Institute
- Beta Club—1st place in state competition; 3rd nationally
- Study Island web-based instruction

High School
- Curriculum Guides developed for End of Course (EOC) disciplines.
- Students complete Graduation Projects.
- Students complete NC’s Future Core Requirements for Graduation.
- Students engage in Project-Based learning.
- Technology used as a tool to enhance learning in all curriculum areas.
- Financial Literacy
- Literacy courses
- Mini-courses
- Gear Up
- Online, Dual enrollment, college courses, and NCVPS options available
Cherokee Athletics

The goal of the Cherokee Athletic Department is to provide opportunities for student-athletes to excel in teamwork, sportsmanship, self-discipline, acceptable personal and social behavior, and character. Members of teams and organizations must always serve as exemplars of high moral character and must demonstrate appropriate academic commitment, which is expected of all students. Participation in athletics at Cherokee is “a privilege, not a right”. In addition to the rules established by NCHSAA, each coach may have rules and expectations for the members of the team, which shall be distributed to all players and parents at the beginning of the season. The Cherokee Central Schools Code of Conduct applies to all student athletes on and off the field of play. All students who participate in athletics are subject to disciplinary consequences imposed by coaches and the administration.

The athletic program at Cherokee Central Schools is designed to produce well-rounded citizens who can take their place in a community and in a democratic society. The program is intended to develop leadership skills, a sense of responsibility and accountability, and sportsmanlike attitudes of the student population. One of the main goals of the athletic department is to teach the concept of sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship requires that everyone be treated with respect. This includes members of the opposing team, teammates, officials, coaches, administrators and spectators. Winning is exciting, but winning at any cost is not the goal. Cherokee Braves will learn how to win with dignity and class.

Fall Sports
Football (JV and Varsity)
Boys and Girls Cross Country (MS and Varsity)
Volleyball (MS, JV and Varsity)
Boys Soccer (Varsity)
Girls Golf (Varsity)

Winter Sports
Boys and Girls Basketball (MS, JV and Varsity)
Wrestling (MS, JV and Varsity)
Boys and Girls Indoor Track (Varsity)

Spring Sports
Baseball (MS, JV and Varsity)
Softball (MS, JV and Varsity)
Track (MS and Varsity)
Girls Soccer (Varsity)
Boys Golf (Varsity)
General Information

- The largest green building project in the region
- Projected to achieve the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification
- 473,000 SF
- The campus houses Elementary, Middle, High Schools, Central Offices, The Hope Center, Creative Learning Center, Pathseekers, & Facilities Maintenance
- Each school has its own Media Center, Gymnasium, & Dining Room

Elementary School

- 2 Computer Labs
- 2 Pre-K Classrooms
- 6 Classrooms per Grades K-5
- Science Classroom
- 4 Cherokee Language Classrooms
- 2 Cultural Centers
- Sacred Path Classroom
- Gathering Place Building – 350 seat, all seasons pavilion

Middle School

- 6th, 7th, & 8th grade classrooms grouped per building floor
- Science Laboratory, Cherokee Language, Math, Reading, Social Studies, Language Arts classrooms per grade
- 2 Computer Labs
- Multipurpose Room for Dance
- Family Consumer Science & Chorus/Band room shared with High School

High School

- Classrooms grouped by subject
- 4 Science Laboratories
- Wood Shop & Wood Carving Suite
- Cherokee Cultural & Visual Arts Suite
- Creative Learning Center
- 2 Cherokee Language & 2 Foreign Language Classrooms
- Health Occupations Education Suite
- 2 Computer Labs

Cultural Arts Center

- 1040 seat, state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center
- Orchestra Lift at stage
- Fully automated rigging system, state-of-the-art lighting & surround sound
- 52’ Fly loft above Stage
- Grand Lobby with Art Gallery & Monumental Stairs

Sports Facilities

- Stickball Field & Locker room
- 8 lane track & Cross country trail system
- Baseball Complex with 4 fields
- Elementary School & Middle School (seating for 300) & Auxiliary gymnasiums (seating for 200)
- Sports Arena with 1600 seats
- Fieldhouse with locker rooms, offices, & weight room
- Stadium with artificial turf, 2500 home & 1040 visitor seats
- 2 story Press Box in Stadium
- Separate Boys’ & Girls’ Fitness Centers at the Middle School
General Information
- The largest green building project in the region
- Projected to achieve the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification
- 90% of the waste generated by construction of the project has been recycled – (over 3000 tons)
- 14 acres of trees harvested to 96,000 Board feet of lumber for use within the school
- The value of all project materials that have recycled content is over 20% of the total project material cost
- Preferred Parking for hybrid vehicles and carpoolers
- Native, culturally significant, & drought tolerant landscaping

Energy Efficiency
- Project overall will use 35% less energy than a non-green code compliant building of the same size
- Geothermal Heating & Cooling System comprised of 290 wells at 450’ deep
- Daylighting of over 75% of regularly occupied spaces
- Occupancy & Daylighting sensors to automatically adjust artificial lighting to users & sunlight levels
- Energy efficient building envelope (mostly Structural Insulated Panels)
- Commissioning to ensure designed systems performance

Stormwater Management
- Strategies employed to promote infiltration of stormwater & remove pollutants from runoff to protect nearby rivers
- Vegetated rain gardens between parking rows and lots capture and filter run-off
- Bio-retention areas (shallow, landscaped depressions) capture stormwater for absorption & slow release
- Pervious paving in overflow parking lots allow rainwater infiltration
- Rainwater harvesting for irrigation and toilet flushing - 60,000 gallons of rainwater storage in underground cisterns located in each courtyard
- Over 50% of the site will be protected or restored with native vegetation

Indoor Air Quality
- HVAC equipment supplies large amounts of fresh air to all spaces
- Carbon Dioxide (CO2) monitoring in assembly spaces to alert system to exhaust stale air when levels rise
- Only non-toxic, low-emitting materials are being used in the buildings

The Importance of Green Schools
- 1/5 (20%) of Americans spend their day in school buildings.
- Children are more susceptible to asthma and sickness due to indoor air quality issues caused by:
  - mold & mildew
  - small doses of toxic chemicals
  - building material off-gassing
General Information

- The project site is culturally significant in that it has been proven by archaeological study to have had continuous Cherokee habitation for over 500 years.
- The site reconnects the community of Big Cove to the rest of the Qualla Boundary
- Clay paints are used on accent walls to mimic traditional paints
- Overall color palettes are from natural colors of white oak splints, split river cane, and honeysuckle as well as natural dyes used in basketry (bloodroot, yellowroot, black walnut)
- Areas for traditional sports such as stickball, chunkey, blowgun, and archery ranges are provided
- 96,000 board feet of lumber was salvaged from the site and reused within the buildings as trim, furniture, decorative wall wainscot, and 7-sided ceiling trellises

Landcape Design

- All plant species used are 100% native and/or culturally significant to the Cherokee, including edible and medicinal plants
- A reforestation area is provided with groves of the seven trees considered sacred by the tribe
- Interpretive signs will list the Cherokee name and traditional uses for different plants
- Specialty gardens and plant propagation projects such as river cane, white oak, basket dye plants, and ramps are featured throughout the landscape and will provide renewable and sustainable resources for students
- A community garden area will feature raised organic beds and a solar powered water supply
- Outdoor classroom areas will include basket weave paving patterns and rustic wood furniture

Building Design Features

- Patterns in the cement stucco on the building exteriors recreate traditional basket weave patterns
- The stucco represents the wattle and daub method of construction used by the early mountain Indians
- Color palettes for the stucco are from the pure raw clay colors as they appear when excavated from the ground.
- Basket weave patterns include: Unbroken Friendship, Man on Horse, Noon Day Sun, Broken Heart, Peace Pipes, Chief’s Heart, & Fish Bone
- The fishbone pattern is repeated in the mullions of the glass curtainwall of the building’s many connectors
- “Road to Soco” contemporary design is repeated on each building in a connected peaks pattern
- Traditional basket weave patterns are repeated on the interior of the buildings in casework laminates, wall coverings, carpet tile arrangement, and metal handrails
- Student art will be able to be incorporated within the schools. A depiction of the creation story’s water beetle was created by two local art students in a stained etching on

Building Layout

- Because the project is so large, individual buildings are created to mimic the “Village” concept
- In traditional Cherokee towns, buildings were typically grouped around the council house
- The schools are arranged around two 7-sided courtyards, each approximately an acre in size
- To respect tradition, most students enter the buildings from the east
- A 350-seat, 7-sided gathering place is provided for cultural events
ARCHAEOLOGY AT RAVENSFORD

The new Cherokee Central Schools Ravensford Campus occupies much of the Ravensford archaeological site, which extended over 50 acres of bottomlands and hillslopes along this stretch of the Raven Fork. For this reason, large-scale archaeological excavations were conducted at Ravensford prior to the school and road construction. The work was conducted by TRC Environmental Corporation under contract to Cherokee Central Schools, and was overseen by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

The work at Ravensford investigated traces of American Indian, Historic Cherokee, and European-American occupations dating from 8000 B.C. to the early 1930s. The work began with hand-excavation of small test squares and larger blocks; a trackhoe was then used to remove the disturbed topsoil and old roads and search for intact deposits. The pits, postholes, and house basins appeared as dark stains in the lighter subsoil, and were then mapped and excavated. Potential human graves were mapped so that they could be avoided during the construction, and were not excavated.

The earliest occupants of Ravensford were small bands of people who moved from place to place with the seasons. These groups camped on the sandy levees along the river, and left behind clusters of rocks that had served as cooking hearths, as well as stone tools and waste debris from tool-making.

The year-round settlement of Ravensford began about 600 to 800 years ago, when ancestral Cherokee Indians began to build houses on the site. These settlements were probably associated with the mound and village site of Nununyi, which was located along Acquoni Road near the old Cherokee High School. These people built several types of houses; although they are now long gone, the traces of these buildings survive as patterns of round post holes filled with dark soil, which represent the locations of the walls and roof supports of these buildings. Inside are the remains of central hearths.

Ravensford also contained the remains of four Cherokee homesteads dating between about A.D. 1680 and 1720. Each contained one or more pairs of summer and winter houses. The former summer houses were visible only as rows of post holes, but the attached winter houses survived as dark, filled-in depressions in the subsoil. Several of these contained the remains of the central hearths, as well as of the burned roof and wall timbers that collapsed on the floors after the buildings were destroyed. The floor deposits contain food remains, pottery vessels and other items that were left behind when the houses were abandoned.

The final occupation at Ravensford dates to about 1918 to the early 1930s. In 1918 the Parsons Pulp and Lumber Company established a lumber mill and town at Ravensford. The town included a large sawmill as well as over 70 houses, two stores, a hotel, a doctor’s office/barber shop, and an infirmary. Although the mill at Ravensford was never very profitable, the town survived until late 1927, when the lumber company went bankrupt. The land was acquired for Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1931, and most of the surviving buildings were dismantled. The excavations recovered large numbers of artifacts from Ravensford, and will help increase understanding of life in this company town.

Temporary displays on the Ravensford work are in the school lobby, and the archaeologists will be available to answer questions at the open house on August 7. The final reports on the project are in preparation, and copies will be placed in the school and local libraries when they are complete. There are also plans to develop lesson outlines based on the archaeological work.

For more information on the Ravensford archaeological work, please contact:

Russell Townsend, EBCI THPO, at russtown@nc-cherokee.com or (828) 554-6851, or Paul Webb, TRC, at pwebb@trcsolutions.com or (919) 530-8446 x222