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72ND ANNUAL

CHEROKEE NATIONAL HOLIDAY

ART & POSTER DESIGN SYMBOLOGY

TŁƆET TSVPSƆ ƆƆY JGEELJRT

Weaving

O U R F U T U R E

The theme of the 72nd annual Cherokee National Holiday is “TŁƆET TSVPSƆ ƆƆY JGEELJRT: Weaving Our Future.” The theme and art were created and designed by Cherokee National Treasure Dan Mink and are meant to illustrate the traditional story of the water spider, one of the smallest creatures that demonstrated that, no matter how small, every one of the tribe’s more than 460,000 citizens can make great and significant contributions to the fabric of Cherokee culture that will have positive impacts on future generations of Cherokees. “Weaving Our Future” also refers to the many ways Cherokee culture is interwoven into every aspect of our daily lives, both big and small, from revitalizing and perpetuating the Cherokee language to caring for our children and our elders.

The Cherokee Nation thrives today as the largest tribe in the country and is woven together by the values and culture that have been passed down by our ancestors, and by the contributions of all Cherokees, even the smallest and humblest among us.

In the Holiday artwork design, the water spider in the center represents the story of the first fire and the bravery shown by this small creature that made an important contribution to the fabric of Cherokee culture. The imagery of a water spider weaving a web also connects to this year’s focus on “Weaving Our Future.”



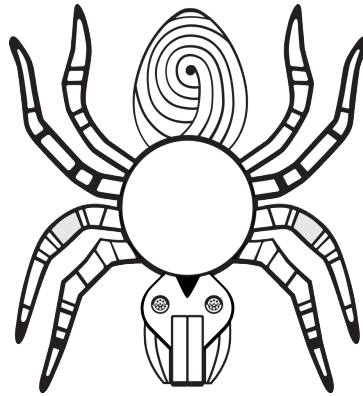
CHEROKEE NATION SEAL

The seal of the Cherokee Nation in the center of the design and on the back of the water spider represents our tribe's collective effort to put the nation and our people at the focus of every decision and how we all work together, in the spirit of gadugi, to lift each other up.



SEVEN CLANS MASKS

Seven stylized clan masks represent the tribe's seven clans that comprised Cherokee Nation's traditional matriarchal society. Three white rings connect each clan mask and are symbolic of past, present and future generations of Cherokees. A flower design at the top of the circle of the seven clans represents those who, through no fault of their own, have lost their clan affiliation.



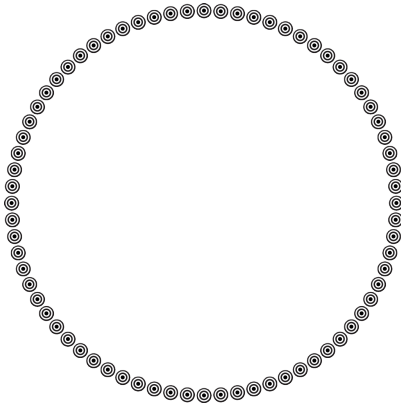
WATER SPIDER

In the Holiday artwork design, the water spider in the center represents the story of the first fire and the bravery shown by this small creature that made an important contribution to the fabric of Cherokee culture. The imagery of a water spider weaving a web also connects to this year's focus on "Weaving Our Future."



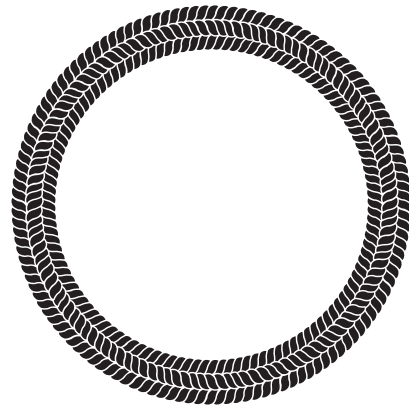
FLOWER

The flower is made of three seven-pointed petals to represent the person and each of their parents.



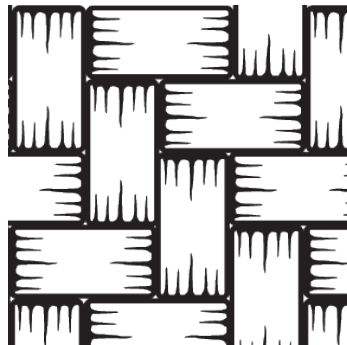
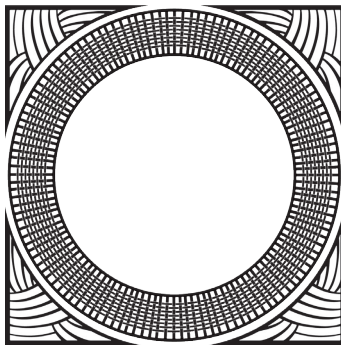
OUTER RING

The outer ring, consisting of 72 circles, represents the 72 Cherokee National holidays that have been celebrated by the tribe since the adoption of Cherokee Nation's constitution on Sept. 6, 1839.



THREE ROPES

The three ropes surrounding the water spider, taken from the Cherokee Nation seal, represent the three branches of Cherokee Nation government: the Executive Branch, led by Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. and Deputy Chief Bryan Warner, the Council of the Cherokee Nation, and the Judicial Branch.



WEAVE PATTERNS

The different weave patterns are the many ways Cherokee culture is interwoven in our daily lives as we honor and preserve our cultural identity while "Weaving Our Future."



STORY OF THE WATER SPIDER

A long time ago, there was no fire and all the animals were cold. While they were sitting there cold, Bear was walking through the woods. As Bear is walking through the woods, he sees a storm brewing. There is an island in the distance and lightning is striking all around the island. Bear is sitting there watching the storm when lightning strikes an old tree and sets it on fire. As Bear is watching the tree go up in flames, Bear thinks to himself, "That looks like the sun. We should get that." So Bear calls a council meeting and tells the others, "There is a tree on fire in the distance, and it looks like the sun. We need somebody to go get the fire." All the animals raised their arms for the honor of retrieving the fire.

The first animal walks up – a raccoon. Bear tells Raccoon: "Go get the fire. You're a good swimmer, and we can see you in the distance with your white fur. You're smart too." Raccoon says, "I am not afraid" and dives in the water and begins to swim. He comes up and flames are shooting up and he's trying to figure out how to climb the tree to retrieve the fire. As he's climbing up the tree, he comes across a knot hole in the tree and peers inside. The fire pops right in his face and he screams and falls off the tree. When he lands, he gets his tail stuck in one of the roots of the tree. He starts screaming and pulls at his tail. He finally pulls his tail out and swims all the way back. When he comes back, everyone says, "Who are you?!" and he says, "Raccoon!" All the other animals exclaim, "Look at your face! It's all burned!" Raccoon goes and peers at his reflection in a creek and there's a black mask across his face. Then the animals exclaim, "Look at your tail!" and everyone looks. His tail has rings on it like rings on a tree.

Raccoon looks at Bear and says, "I'm not going back. It's too scary. I'm gonna go sit over here."

So the Bear says, "Who's next that wants to try and get the fire?" Some of the hands drop, but one still has their arm raised. It's Raven. Raven is beautiful and has the most beautiful feathers in the world like the rainbow. Bear says, "Raven, you go. You fly and bring us back fire." The Raven says, "I am not afraid. I will go get the fire." The Raven flies away and as the Raven flies and circles around that burning fire, it keeps waiting and watching and finally the smoke clears and he dives straight all the way down to the bottom of the tree. When he's down to the bottom, he says, "I will pick up the fire with my feet," but when he picks his claws up and tries to grab the fire, it starts to burn his feet. As he's kicking, trying to get away from the fire, he kicks it up and sends more air into the fire. It begins popping and scaring Raven and before too long, Raven is surrounded by all this smoke and trying to crawl his way out of that fire. He's coughing and spends about an hour making his way out and finally flies all the way back. When he lands, all the animals say, "Who is this?" And he says, "I'm Raven." Bear says, "Look at your feathers!" Raven holds up his feathers and they're black all over from the soot from that smoke. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get rid of the soot. But if you hold up a raven feather up to the sun and look at it, it has the colors of the rainbow and that's what Raven used to look like.

The Raven says, "I'm not going back over there. It's too scary. I'm gonna hang out with Raccoon."

Bear then says again, "Who wants to go get the fire?" and this huge snake crawling on up says, "I will go get the fire. I am not afraid." Bear knows Snake is a good swimmer. Snake swims across the lake, sees that fire burning and says, "I will carry it back with my teeth" and opens his mouth to bite the fire. As he opens his mouth, he breathes on it and again it starts to pop and scares that snake. Snake writhes back and forth.

If you scare Snake to this day, it will do this back and forth with his head because it remembers being scared by that fire. The snake tries to get out, but realizes he can't go back up so he starts to crawl underneath. As he's crawling underneath, branches and things are falling on his back and burning his back. He slides out through the roots where the raccoon's tail got stuck and swims all the way back. When he comes back, everyone says, "Look at your scales!" His scales were black on one side and white on the other.

Snake sits down and says, "I'm not going back. It's too scary over there."

The next animal comes up and says, "I will go get the fire." Bear looks at this animal and says, "You will go get the fire. You're brave, you're strong, you can fly. Owls are good." Owl flies over and as he is circling around that fire, it starts popping and hitting Owl's feathers and turning them dark and burned. Owl lands right beside the knot hole and peeks inside to see the fire, and again, it burns his eyes. When he comes back, he looks at everybody and says, "Fire burned my eyes." Everyone looked at him and says, "Your eyes are orange!" To this day, screech owls' eyes are orange because of that fire.

Owl says, "I'm not going back. It's too scary," and goes and sits with the other animals.

By this time, nobody is wanting to go. Everybody's getting burned until finally this little voice says, "I will go get the fire. I'm not afraid." Bear turns and looks and this little water spider crawling up and says, "You're just a bug. You're a Water Spider. You're tiny. How can you go get the fire?" The little water spider says, "I have a plan." All the animals say,

"Let the water spider try!" and so a little water spider starts to swim across the lake. He gets over there and has paid attention to the others' mistakes and knows to not go inside the tree. Water Spider digs around, grabs some sticks, digs inside underneath the roots, pulls out an ember and begins to blow on it. The ember starts to glow and flames start to show up and so the little water spider figures out a way to get the fire going and now has to figure out a way to bring it back. The little water spider crawls around and finds some mud and makes a little pot, sets it down, puts the ember on it, closes it and puts it on their back and starts to swim again. Water Spider swims all the way back, and Bear looks at the little water spider and says, "Where's the fire?" The little water spider says, "Watch!" and rolls out that little pot, puts the ember off to the side, puts the pot off to the other side and begins to blow on the ember. As the flames start to pick up, he puts some sticks and twigs under it and it gets bigger. All the animals are amazed. They begin to gather sticks and twigs, and they bring it forward. As they begin to blow on the fire, it gets bigger and bigger and before long, they have a fire. That is the first fire Cherokees ever had.

The moral of the story is never ever push somebody off to the side just because they're smaller than you because the smallest person in the world can still do the greatest things for their people.

— TOGETHER —
COMMUNITY › FAMILY › CULTURE