

The Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources (RTCAR) initiative is a multi-year grantmaking program whose purpose is to assist the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) as the tribe works to restore the traditional Cherokee balance between maintaining and using natural resources like river cane, white oak and clay. Funded by Cherokee Preservation Foundation, RTCAR has been undertaken to teach, protect and promote Cherokee traditional art, resources and land care for present and future generations.

RTCAR
 REVITALIZATION
 OF TRADITIONAL
CHEROKEE
 ARTISAN RESOURCES



RTCAR is a Cherokee Preservation Foundation initiative operated through the Cherokee Studies program at Western Carolina University.

For a copy of RTCAR's Grant Guidelines (which includes information about eligibility requirements, grant types and amounts, the number of applications permitted, RTCAR's grant calendar and other details) or other information, visit www.rtcар.org

For further information, contact:
 David Cozzo, Project Director
 Beth Johnson, Community Development Specialist
 Phone: 828.554.6856
 E-mail: cozzod@wcu.edu, johnsonb@wcu.edu

RTCAR

2877 Governor's Island Rd.
 Bryson City, NC 28713

Building bridges
 between cultural
 and environmental
 preservation

Why RTCAR Has Been Undertaken

As a result of agricultural land clearing, dam-building projects, modern-era land development and other circumstances over the past century or more, the natural resources used by Cherokee artisans for centuries are becoming scarce and some are non-existent on the Qualla Boundary and in other local areas. Quality river cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) and white oak (*Quercus alba*) used to make baskets are very difficult to find locally, and so is the clay that Cherokee potters need. Carvers have resource problems as well because the wood and stone they need is often in areas with restricted access.

Initially RTCAR will focus on basket making materials and associated dye plants, clay for potters and materials for carvers. The project will eventually expand to include culturally significant edible and medicinal plant resources. Teaching Cherokee youth about the Eastern Band's artistic traditions is another important aspect of RTCAR. Cherokee crafts will be perpetuated by passing cultural traditions and knowledge on to younger generations of the tribe.



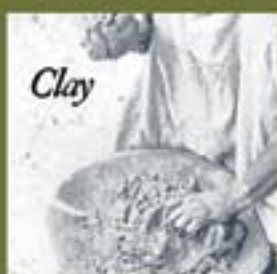
River Cane

River cane, the only native species of bamboo in North America, has been used by generations of Cherokees to make baskets, house walls and roofs, beds, and even flour when crops failed. Once found in dense clusters, canebrakes have been diminished by land development and other circumstances over the last century.



White Oak

Cherokee artists select young white oak saplings to harvest splints for their baskets. Land development, as well as loss of access to public and private woodlands, limits the supply of the high-quality, straight-grained oak required to produce superior baskets.



Clay

Cherokee potters used to make their products from local clays, but today, they must often buy it from dealers in other states. Relocating traditional clay pits and identifying new local sources reinforces the relationship between the potter and the medium, infusing the final product with a sense of place.



One of RTCAR's goals is to encourage projects that enable master artisans to teach Cherokee youths about their cultural heritage through learning experiences much like the one that took place in this carving class approximately 50 years ago.

RTCAR Is Encouraging Collaboration

RTCAR wants to identify grant applicants and others who will work together effectively as they undertake projects involving habitat restoration, research in sustainable harvesting techniques, and cultural preservation that will provide Cherokee artisans with access to river cane and other natural resources essential to their craft.

Potential partners include artisans, university researchers, landowners, government agencies (EBCI, federal and state), and other funders (private foundation and government agencies) that would consider RTCAR's endeavors to be good investments. Applicants may be located beyond the Qualla Boundary and the seven-county area in western North Carolina that Cherokee Preservation Foundation generally serves (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties), provided that the natural resources they develop will be available to Cherokee artisans.

RTCAR's Funding Focus

RTCAR's funding objectives are to:

- Preserve and protect the uniqueness of Cherokee traditional art and natural resources for future generations.
- Reclaim Cherokee youths' interest in cultural heritage, using educational methods that promote Cherokee identity and the development of positive cultural esteem.
- Expand and disseminate public knowledge about the protection and preservation of cultural artisan resources.
- Expand and enhance the network of organizations that demonstrate leadership toward the realization of RTCAR's goals.



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Each generation of Cherokee artists carries on tribal traditions, but also leaves its own imprint.



We seek collaborators who can map existing natural resources so we can establish what resources are presently available and how to access them. Other partners can help develop new and renewed sources of natural materials.

Partners who can facilitate the participation of elder artists will be important to RTCAR's success. We also value those who can help develop educational curricula for area schools (K-12), colleges and universities to teach traditional methods of caring for and harvesting natural resources.

Partners with unique business and legal ideas are welcome. We want to increase market access and business skills of Cherokee artisans, and pursue RTCAR's goals with innovative model leases, management agreements, or protection plans for lands harboring valuable resources.

And these are just the partners we already know we are looking for! We are eager to see breakthrough proposals for programs that will help us restore the traditional Cherokee balance between maintaining and using natural resources throughout western North Carolina.