



Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians

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OFFICES OF THE PRINCIPAL CHIEF & VICE CHIEF

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11 – January – 2011

Ms. Sheila Harris
Santa Rosa County Parks Operations
6495 Caroline St, Suite J
Milton, FL 32570

ʌbɬ (Si-yo / Greetings) Ms. Harris:

RE: Public Input on Bagdad Mill Site Park Project

The Bagdad Mill site is an area that is near and dear to the hearts of the Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians (FTCI). That is because William Johnson, one of the former owners of the site, and a known Cherokee who many in the Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians are descended from, was also the founder of both Santa Rosa County and its County Seat of Milton. In fact, he is the great, great, great grandfather of the Principal Chief and great, great grandfather of our tribe's Historian. Aside from the connection to William Johnson, this mill provided the revenues needed for this county to form and prosper. Moreover, the mill provided many American Indians a second chance on life.

The FTCI, and our non-profit charity, has many friends and connections available at our disposal. We literally have people and agencies, like Auburn University (AU), begging work come to Santa Rosa County to work with us on projects. The Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection always want to do projects with us. Indeed, we bring a great potential to help the American Indian peoples of Santa Rosa County. Moreover, according to a recent poll of American Indians, conducted by the Department of Health's HIV/AIDS Task Force, approximately 17% of the American Indian population of Florida responding to the poll came from Santa Rosa County.

With such a strong connection to the mill, and the county having such an unusually large population of American Indians, we feel that the site could be enhanced with a section devoted to the American Indian community of this great county. Already, the Maritime Park, in Escambia County, is considering something very similar to what we propose. We feel that this would be something that would truly benefit the peoples of Santa Rosa County.

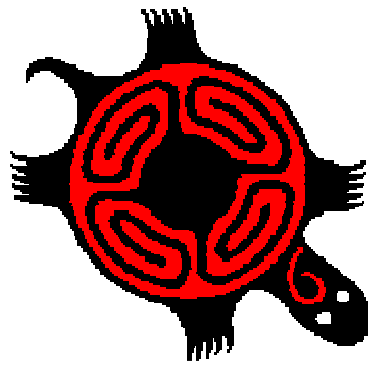
Your consideration in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ken Johnson, M.B.A.
Principal Chief

Ricky D. Wallace, Sr.
Vice Chief

SANTAROSA COUNTY NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE RESOURCE CENTER



A Proposal by the Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians, Inc.
on behalf of the
Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians

Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians
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I. FACILITIES

We propose the County building a center that houses a museum, classrooms, meeting area, and office space, to wit:

- A. The museum would talk about the culture of the tribes of this area (i.e., The founder of Santa Rosa, as well as former owner of the mill, was Cherokee and many of his workers were Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek and Choctaw.).
- B. The classrooms would provide sources of education on Native American arts, culture, languages, etc. When not used as classrooms, they could serve as dual purpose rooms for rendering tutoring, counseling, and other sources of aid and assistance. The Department of Health, Department of Environmental Protection, etc. all offer to come out and help the American Indian community, as a partner with the Florida Tribe of Cherokee Indians (FTCI), but there isn't a place for us to set up these agencies to help the American Indian peoples of Florida. These classrooms would provide the area needed to provide these sources that the FTCL cannot provide ourselves.
- C. The office space and meeting facilities would be for tribal representatives of all tribes based in Santa Rosa County (Note: The FTCL is the only tribe of Cherokees based and operating in Santa Rosa County as opposed to at least two known tribes of Creeks that are based and operating in Santa Rosa County.).

II. HERITAGE GARDEN DISPLAY

We also propose a heritage garden to show how American Indians grew certain crops through such strategies as companion planting. The FTCL already has an active program in place where we are aggressively protecting heirloom seed. The FTCL is willing to donate critically endangered seeds, which we are presently protecting, to openly display to the public. Since most Eastern Woodlands tribes used similar types of planting strategies, as well as plants, this would be a generalized garden to give the overall insight into overall planting strategies, types of plants planted, preparations of plants (i.e., the corn used back then had to be soaked in lye water overnight to turn it into hominy or else the village would die of malnutrition), usage of by-products of garden plants (i.e., corn husks were added to pottery before it was fired to make the vessels waterproof), etc.

III. RESEARCH/EXPERIMENTATION SITE

Additionally, we propose a research/experimentation site for endangered and culturally sensitive ethnobotanicals. Ethnobotanicals are plant species that have a unique and special connection to a given ethnicity of peoples. For the Cherokee, as well as many of the Southeastern Woodlands tribes, ethnobotanicals include plant species such as bloodroot, jewelweed, palmetto, hickory, black walnut, sumac, tobacco, cattail, and most importantly – rivercane.

- A. The FTCL presently has relations with Auburn University (AU). AU is presently studying a revolutionary method of growing rivercane from seed. Rivercane is a culturally sensitive ethnobotanical to many tribes. It is used for mats, baskets, arrow shafts, flutes, and a host of other items. It was the original alternative to wood and was used for house building and other practices before the Europeans arrived.

- B. AU wants to work with the FTCl to do a test site in Santa Rosa County to further this research into the propagation of rivercane via seed. Until now, the propagation of rivercane, by seed planting, was impossible and the plant could only be cultivated from rootstock cuttings. This new methodology could drastically change the market for native plants as well as to protect a dying species of plant – America’s only true, native bamboo.
- C. AU researchers are needing a minimum of 1 acre to do the test site. The FTCl is willing to teach the public about the rivercane and serve as an emissary to teach the public about the value of the research being done.

IV. PARTNERSHIP

Through our non-profit charitable arm, the FTCl is willing to partner with Santa Rosa County, and any other participating tribes, so as to provide volunteers to work the center, garden, etc. much like Santa Rosa County already has partnerships with other non-profits to work sports complexes, the veteran’s memorial, etc.

V. KEEPING WITH THE HERITAGE OF THE AREA

This proposal is in keeping with the heritage of the area and with national and local trends of park systems to include minority culture education in areas where parks have a specific tie to a certain, or set of, minority group(s).

