

Greetings to all tribal members,

By the time this newsletter comes out spring will be upon us. It will be time to bless the seeds and give thanks to Son qwa ya tis soot (our creator) for the sun, moon, rain and all things he provides to give us life.

In the upcoming months we will be having out tribal ceremonies. For those that may not know there are 5 ceremonies we have during the year. I know some of you may be wondering 5? I thought there were 4. I will explain that in a bit. Anyway they are

- Spring Sundance - April generally
- Strawberry dance - May
- Blackberry dance - July
- Green Corn – Thanksgiving – first full week of August
- Fall Sundance – Same week as Green Corn

The Fall Sundance actually takes place at the end of Green Corn so it depends upon how you look at it.

As a native people our heritage holds dear the rituals, traditions and ceremonies which give our thanks to the creator for what he has provided for us. While even though centuries have passed the beliefs remain the same. We continue to give “Thanks” in the prayers, songs and dance all of which were given to us for that purpose.

You see our ancestors relied up growing crops for food and the ability to live off the land. Our ceremonies reflect that in each one. The Sundance give thanks for the sun (sa qwa tay tan nay), and that it will continue to shine and give life to the crops we grow. It also asks that the seeds we plant will be blessed and grow to a good harvest. During the seed dance while the men sing you will see the women making the gestures of planting seeds.

The next ceremony is the Strawberry dance which is held when the wild strawberries are ripe and the women pot hangers set the date. The Strawberry dance gives thanks for the first fruit of the season, and is another form of thanksgiving. It is a day dance and is usually finished by noon.

Next we have the Blackberry dance which takes place the first full moon in July. We give thanks for the moon in this ceremony by showing gratitude for her part in the changing of the seasons, and cycle of man. For it is the moon (tis soot - grandmother) which provided light at night and guides us during our planting season. Have you ever looked in a Farmer’s Almanac? Ever notice how planting times are determined? This is a nighttime dance that begins when the moon is full and begins rising just above the tree lines at the stomp grounds. It ends after the singing of the morning songs when the sun begins to rise.

The next is Green Corn which comprises several activities but in essence is our “Thanksgiving”. Where it is a time to give thanks for the harvest, have the dance of prayer (stos koo wah) and cleanse ourselves spiritually.

I am not sure how much space they will allow me but I would like start adding some words to the newsletter each time. Now we (Seneca-Cayuga's) have no written alphabet. While our northern brothers have established a system I will have to rely upon the spell it like it sounds concept. Back in the 60's Aunt Ruby, Uncle Dutch and Uncle Bob had language classes for a time which is where these words come from. Now as with all teachers the pronunciation of the words can vary to a certain degree so please keep that in mind.

Bread – not an dah	Come and eat – dwa tay cone nee
Eat – tay cone nee	No more/all gone – tan zee
Offering – ka tran da	Come here – got zee

I hope this has provided some insight into our culture for those that have been unable to attend the ceremonies. As a people our tribe has grown in size but it has also grown away from the way life used to be. If we do not strive to stay connected to our heritage we will be swallowed up and loose who we are, The Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma.

Nya Weh
Toot no son dee
Ceremonial Chief
Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma