

ga-du-gi 2007

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITY

Cherokee Preservation Foundation was established in 2002 with a two-pronged purpose: to improve the quality of life among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and to strengthen our neighboring communities. Each year, with this report, we show you what's changing as a result of the work we are doing together.

As this Foundation turns five years old, we are beginning to see some of our early investments pay off in community improvements. This report documents that progress – both on-the-ground in tangible capital projects, and in the form of helpful programs that are reaching local residents and our visitors.

We have now distributed over \$30 million in the areas of economic development, cultural preservation and environmental preservation. Part of our responsibility is to be a good steward of this resource and track how this money is used and what difference it is making.

The role of the Foundation is to continuously help identify needs and opportunities on the Qualla Boundary and in the surrounding seven counties. Then we work with local leaders who design projects that can improve our communities. This is a process that takes many distinct steps over time before we see results.

Inside this publication, you will see descriptions of progress in our three focus areas. We have spotlighted projects in various phases of work—using a basket-making theme to help describe how change happens. You will see these basket drawings throughout this report to indicate the various stages of development of the projects the Foundation is supporting.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK – The Foundation supports planning processes that help chart a positive course for our community's future. In this report, we highlight new research on the profile of tourists who visit western North Carolina. We also look at a program of experimental white oak planting practices that are designed to increase the supply of basket-making materials for Cherokee artisans.

GRANTEE PROGRESS – We provide the funding, but it is up to the recipient organizations to implement the projects. We report here on several grantees that are making significant progress: renovating the Horseshoe area of downtown Cherokee, revitalizing the Cherokee language, and protecting river cane sites.

INSTITUTIONALIZING CHANGE – The Foundation wants change to be lasting, which requires that organizations make a commitment to doing their work differently and effectively. In this report, we tell the story of how the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce and the Sequoyah Fund have found new ways to support local businesses so they can be more successful in the future. We also continue to track Cherokee cultural attractions and how they are changing to better serve visitors and build their own organizational capacity (the *Unto These Hills* outdoor drama,



LAYING THE GROUNDWORK



GRANTEE PROGRESS



INSTITUTIONALIZING CHANGE



REALIZING BENEFITS

the Oconaluftee Indian Village, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, and the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual).

REALIZING BENEFITS – Ultimately, it is the Foundation's goal for our funded projects to directly benefit people. **Look inside for our map of Economic Investment that documents completed work in and around downtown Cherokee, as well as the cultural attractions—made possible through significant, multi-year funding by the Foundation.** There's also a description in the Environmental Preservation section about how grants to the Land Trust of the Little Tennessee have produced major benefits in the form of river cane for local artists and the acquisition and permanent preservation of the Cowee Mound.

All of this activity is possible due to a working partnership between the Foundation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and our neighbors in surrounding counties. We will continue investing in change and tracking outcomes. Each year, we will report to the Cherokee community and to the Foundation Board on our progress and on the challenges we face together. That is our commitment – to help preserve and improve this treasured place that the Cherokee have called home for so many generations.

On behalf of everyone on the Cherokee Preservation Foundation staff—Bobby Raines, Ashleigh Brown, Ethan Clapsaddle, Deb Mintz, Wanda McCoy, Deborah Grant and Hwineko Walkingstick,

Susan Jenkins

Executive Director, Cherokee Preservation Foundation



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



FOCUS: TRACKING HERITAGE TOURISM

\$210,000 invested

A focus of community economic development in Cherokee is tourism—and the Cherokee Preservation Foundation is investing in new research that sheds light on who is currently visiting western North Carolina as well as opportunities to increase tourism to our local area.

PROJECT STATUS:

Two studies completed by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) reveal a profile of the “heritage tourist” who is coming to the mountain region. The research, which has been conducted at welcome centers and visitor sites around western North Carolina, shows that the primary motivation for coming to this area is “escape and relaxation” and, in particular, “scenic drives and the Blue Ridge Parkway.”

According to the studies, the typical visitor to western North Carolina is between 46 and 65 years of age, is well-educated with at least some college, and earns upwards of \$75,000 annually. These characteristics

fit the profile of the much sought-after heritage tourist or cultural traveler, as they are known in the hospitality field. This information—on visitors’ age, education, and income, as well as length-of-stay—has been shown to be an indicator of the amount of money tourists spend during their visit and, thereby, the potential positive impact on the local economy.

More in-depth research is planned on those who specifically choose Cherokee as a destination. The next phase of the BRNHA research will focus on customer satisfaction. This spring, visitors to

Cherokee are being asked to rank their “satisfaction with the amenities that Cherokee has to offer” including lodging, restaurants, shopping and attractions. They will rate variety, quality, and prices for these amenities. They also are being asked whether they would recommend Cherokee to their family, colleagues or friends. These results will be reported to community leaders in Cherokee so they can learn how to strengthen the visitor experience for the future.

Also in the past year, Foundation funds helped BRNHA:

- ◆ Create educational exhibits about the region that will be placed at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Oconaluftee Indian Village, the *Unto These Hills* outdoor drama, and Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual.
- ◆ Convene two Heritage Forums that brought together tourism leaders from the Qualla Boundary, Swain, Jackson, Macon, and Haywood counties. Participants had training in grant application and management, and also heard keynote speaker Thomas Sander of the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government.

Area cultural organizations and business leaders are following the work of BRNHA closely as they look for opportunities to build tourism in Cherokee. They predict that the right kind of marketing, backed up by high quality visitor products and experiences, could attract the cultural traveler who is already in the area but may need more reasons to come to Cherokee in the future.

TRENDS AT CHEROKEE CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

ANNUAL VISITATION

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Cherokee Historical Association				
<i>Unto These Hills</i> outdoor drama	53,072	43,947	54,344	65,196
Oconaluftee Indian Village	92,461	72,665	72,799	74,752
Museum of the Cherokee Indian	102,874	85,146	79,223	95,127



FOCUS: DOWNTOWN CHEROKEE GETS A NEW LOOK

\$1.3 million invested

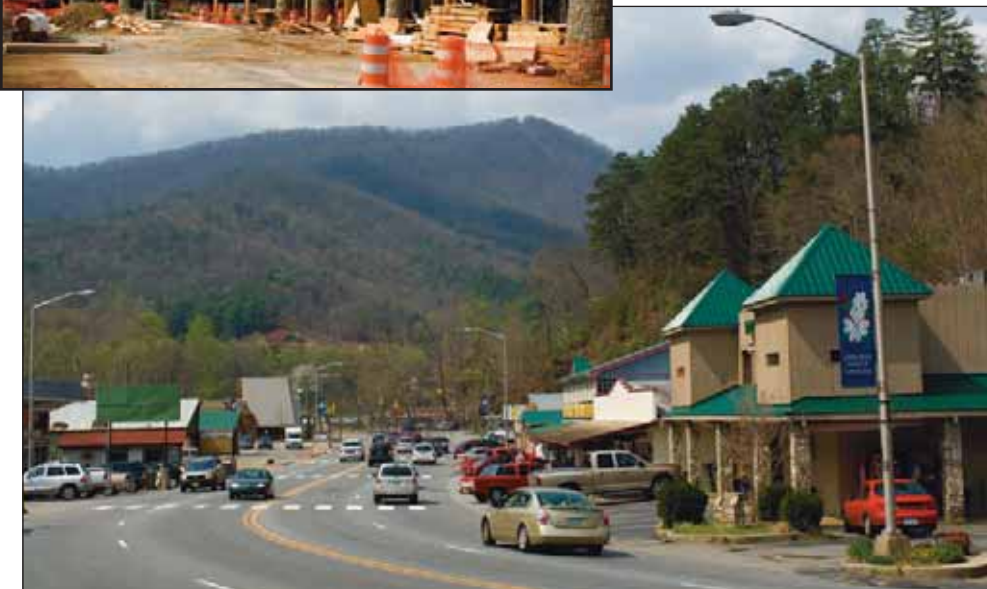
With heritage tourism key to Cherokee’s economic future, the Foundation has joined with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Planning and Development Office to help renovate the downtown and retail areas so that they have a more traditional appearance and visual appeal. This revitalization was a top recommendation of the Vision Qualla planning process initiated by the Foundation, which called for improving façades throughout downtown; making the area more pedestrian-friendly by adding walkways, plantings and seating; and adding way-finding signage throughout the area.

PROJECT STATUS:

The Horseshoe area of downtown (now called Riverbend) is nearing completion of its facelift, with the Foundation providing funding for façade and exterior renovations to bring the buildings into line with master plan guidelines. Riverbend is Tribally-owned property and a total of 10 businesses have been upgraded through the construction program. (See map spread on pages 4 and 5 of this report for a visual update on the projects that are completed or underway with this support.)

What does success look like?

Early results are that the renovated businesses are seeing a significant increase in income due to the aesthetic improvements, a trend which we will track in future years to gauge the impact of this capital investment.



The Riverbend and Highway 19, Downtown Cherokee



FOCUS: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TAKES OFF

Investment: \$2 million to Sequoyah Fund and \$236,000 to the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce

One of the goals of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation is for grants to have a lasting impact on the way organizations work. This is the case with two grantees: the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce and the Sequoyah Fund. These two strong forces are changing the course of local business development. Both of these entities are working to build infrastructure that supports the start-up, success and expansion of businesses in and around Cherokee. As Cherokee changes and grows, these established organizations can guide and support current and future business activity.

PROJECT STATUS:

The Cherokee Chamber of Commerce is 18 months old and has surpassed 100 members. They gather monthly—with active committees meeting in between—to network and strategize about how to make Cherokee more of a hub for travelers in the area. “On your next visit to the Smokies, make Cherokee your home base” reads their just-released Great Smoky Mountains 2007 Family Travel Guide. The seed for the Chamber was planted two years ago through the Heart of Cherokee planning process, which was initiated and funded by the CPFdn. The Chamber is working to unite the business community and develop new avenues for promotion, according to organizers. Their message is that there is so much to do in and around Cherokee you can spend a week here—fishing, rafting, horseback riding, and visiting quality attractions like the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad in addition to the cultural attractions within Cherokee.

Chamber initiatives underway with Foundation support include:

- ◆ Offering the Qualla-T customer service certification program to local Cherokee businesses (the training will be offered by the new Chamber executive director).
- ◆ Helping to develop a banners program, which will place colorful banners around the cultural district.
- ◆ Continuing to operate the web site www.cherokeesmokies.com, which receives 70 inquiries per week, and the call center, which receives 100 calls per week.
- ◆ Producing the annual Family Travel Guide, with a map and calendar of events, and information on sights to see, outdoor ideas, lodging, dining and shopping.
- ◆ Helping to fund a first-time, full-time executive director.

PROJECT STATUS:

The Sequoyah Fund provides business loans and partners with Cherokee Business Development (a Tribal program) and other entities to deliver the technical assistance business people need to be successful. (See map spread on pages 4 and 5 of this report for a visual update on Sequoyah



Fishing tournament draws families to Cherokee



Fund projects that are completed or planned.)

The goal of the Sequoyah Fund is to offer a full range of supportive services—from planning, to financing and technical support—to meet the distinct needs of the start-up entrepreneur as well as experienced business owner. In the past, many local people looked outside the Qualla Boundary for this type of support. But the Sequoyah Fund is creating local capacity that will be ongoing.



The idea for establishing this independent nonprofit with federal CDFI status (Community Development Financial Institution) came from the staff of the Cherokee Business Development office seeking to achieve greater capacity for serving the community. As a CDFI, the Sequoyah Fund follows strict financial industry standards and works with people who traditionally do not have access to capital.

In the past year, the Sequoyah Fund and its partners have accomplished the following with CPFdn support (participant numbers are annual):

- ◆ Made loans totaling \$1.75 million including 10 façade loans—ranging from \$21,500 to \$150,000; 3 roofing loans—ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000; and 24 business development loans—ranging from \$5,040 to \$147,500 for equipment, working capital, and/or inventory. These loans helped support 177 jobs at local businesses.

- ◆ Dramatically expanded training and technical assistance to meet market need:

New Ventures – for first-time business owners; 120 served.

Business Plan Basics – overview of what goes into a business plan; 60 served.

Indianpreneurship – 12-week, culturally based curriculum on business development, adapted from a proven tribal program in Oregon; 120 served.

Becoming an Investor-Ready Entrepreneur – helps in accessing private equity; 40 served.

Show Me the Money – financial management skills; 30 served.

Government Procurement – how to become a government contractor; 25 served.

Individual Technical Assistance – 250 served.

- ◆ Created customized intake system:

All businesses have needs documented and receive a written action plan.

New businesses are referred to a Business Development Specialist; get instruction on drafting a Basic Business Plan; learn about the Indianpreneurship class.

Established businesses are referred to a Success Coach who recommends next steps.

- ◆ Existing business owners have new training including: inventory control, certification for federal procurement contracts, business relocations, marketing, and more.

- ◆ Launched new web site, organized from the business person’s perspective.

- ◆ Began strategic planning on how to best carry out the Sequoyah Fund mission of helping people pursue successful businesses that provide a year-round locally-based economy.



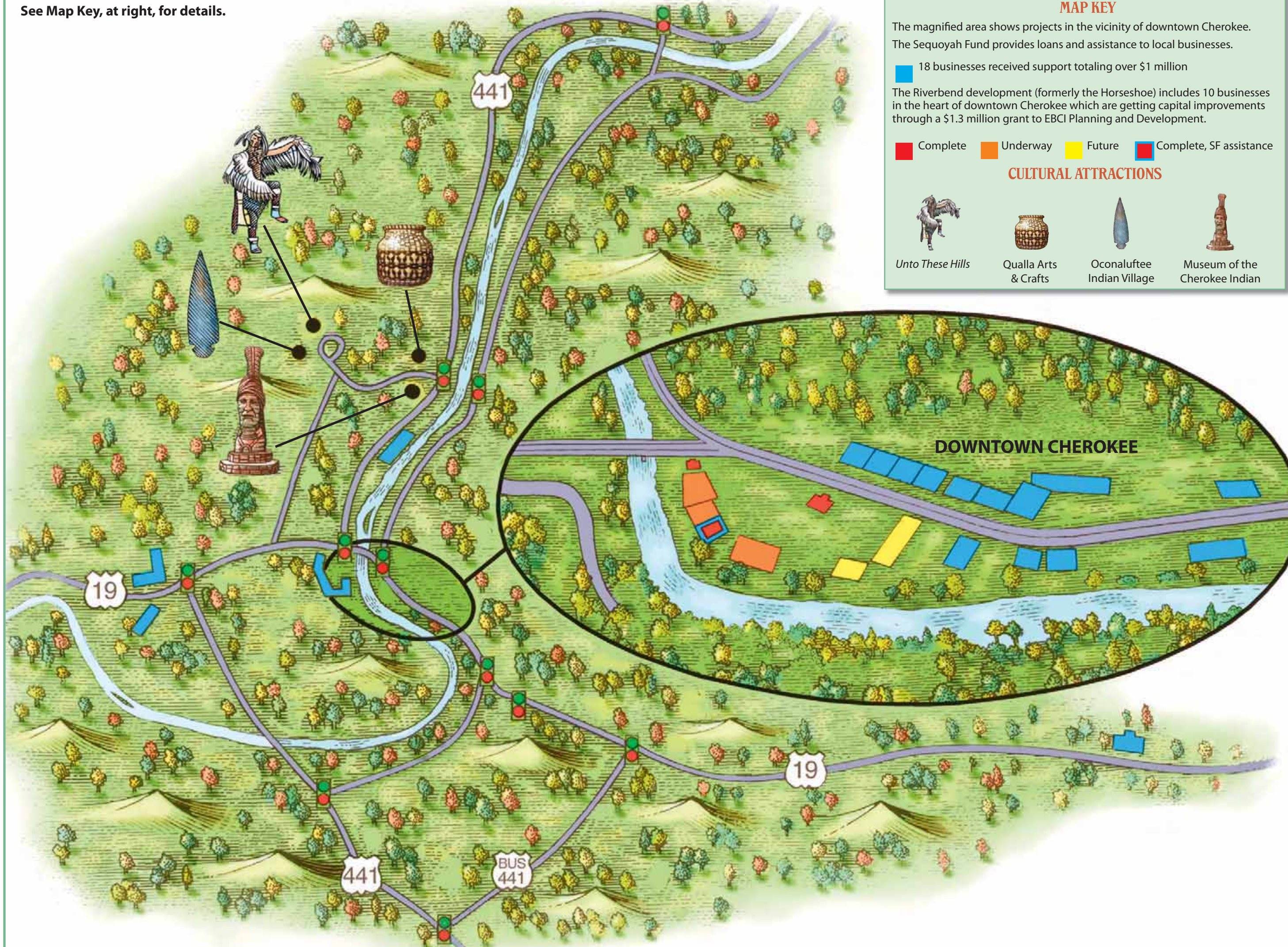
“What’s Hot” owners benefit from Sequoyah Fund. Left to right: Sequoyah Fund staff Chris James, Associate Director; Nell Leatherwood, Executive Director; Sherrene Swayney, Portfolio Manager; at back, “What’s Hot” owners Darrell and Lynn Pyle

ECONOMIC INVESTMENT IN CHEROKEE

A key purpose of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation is to help create a vibrant local economy on the Qualla Boundary. This is being done through a combination of downtown revitalization, heritage tourism, and business development (efforts described on the preceding two pages). While positive economic development will be a long-term pursuit for Cherokee and its residents, we are beginning to see significant progress in the projects supported by recent Foundation grants.

The map below highlights economic investments exceeding \$2.3 million that the Foundation has made in the local community.

See Map Key, at right, for details.



ENHANCING CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Another promising result of economic investment is the impressive increase in annual visitation to Cherokee cultural attractions (see "Trends" chart on Page 2; attendance is up 20 percent at the *Unto These Hills* outdoor drama and Museum of the Cherokee Indian; visitation is up 3 percent at the Oconaluftee Indian Village). The Foundation has invested more than \$2.7 million in marketing the Cherokee cultural attractions, and the Cherokee Preservation Foundation has also provided funding exceeding \$9 million directly for capital and program grants to the cultural institutions.

Listed below are some key steps taken at the Cherokee cultural attractions during the past year with Cherokee Preservation Foundation support:

CHEROKEE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION – UNTO THESE HILLS AND OCONALUFTEE VILLAGE

- ◆ The *Unto These Hills* outdoor drama is undergoing further changes to enhance the script.
- ◆ First-time "theater craft" classes are being offered to local people to boost "homegrown" talent and move toward year-round programming.
- ◆ New Program and Theater Director position, to guide artistic decisions of the drama and village; additionally a Village Enterprise and Education Director will be hired.
- ◆ Internet ticketing services upgraded to track demographics of attendees.
- ◆ Capital improvements including a new rain shelter at the drama.



QUALLA ARTS AND CRAFTS MUTUAL

- ◆ New Outreach Coordinator hired to develop classes and work with artists.
 - ◆ Continued upgrading of facility interior with new flooring and display areas.
 - ◆ Planning for "Experience Qualla" with craft classes and demonstrations, a potential area for fee-based income in the future.
 - ◆ One basket-making class offered in double-weave, using locally harvested river cane.
 - ◆ New demonstration area for showing Cherokee crafts being made.
 - ◆ On the exterior, new gutters, landscaping, arbor and garden.
- In addition, Qualla:
- ◆ Continued to recruit new member artists held to high quality standards;
 - ◆ Implemented a Finance Committee to provide greater fiscal oversight;
 - ◆ Began renting meeting space to generate revenue and meet a community need.



Artist Joel Queen with his pottery

MUSEUM OF THE CHEROKEE INDIAN

- ◆ "Emissaries of Peace: the 1762 Cherokee and British Delegations" exhibit opened April 2006. This new exhibit contributed to increased visitation for the museum.
- ◆ Emissaries will travel to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC in June; Colonial Williamsburg is producing a film documentary and electronic field trip based on Emissaries to air on PBS stations November 8, 2007.
- ◆ The Museum Store renovation and increased visitation produced sales increase of 21 percent over the previous year.
- ◆ The Southeastern Tribes Cultural Arts Celebration in May 2006 attracted several thousand visitors, as well as crafts demonstrators, native food, artists, dance groups, storytelling, traditional contests, games and representatives from the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Choctaw, and Seminole Nations.
- ◆ Publication of the Cherokee translation of *Thirteen Moons* by Charles Frazier, as the first work in the Cherokee Literature Initiative.
- ◆ Foundation funding started the museum's capital campaign for a new educational wing, to include a public reading room and archives, classroom, art and archeology studios.



CULTURAL PRESERVATION



FOCUS: REVITALIZING CHEROKEE LANGUAGE

\$1.02 million investment

Community leaders have known for years that the Cherokee language is threatened with extinction due to the many native elder speakers who are no longer with us. Now, local leaders are learning how to revitalize this traditional form of communication that is so critically linked to the preservation of what it means to be Cherokee.

“Speaking a language means we have a culture,” said a respected Cherokee elder. “Having a culture makes us significant. There’s a big difference between people who have a culture and people with a history.”

The first comprehensive survey of Cherokee language use was completed in 2005 and revealed that only about 460 fluent speakers of the Cherokee language remain on the Qualla Boundary. That number has dropped to around 400 and is declining by about 18 per year due to deaths of native elders, according to the Kituwah Preservation and Education Program (KPEP).

PROJECT STATUS:

The process of stimulating use of Cherokee language is a complex endeavor because while it has been spoken over hundreds of years, there is little in written form that can be used for instruction and few people are trained in teaching it. In 2002, the Foundation helped support planning and curriculum development to launch a total immersion class for pre-school students to learn Cherokee as their first language. Today, three immersion classrooms thrive with 27 students ages 12 to 36 months; the toddlers and their parents are learning to speak and read together. The Tribe now operates the immersion pre-school program, which employs 10 fluent speakers as teachers.

In order to expand Cherokee language learning, significant infrastructure must be created in the form of curriculum development and teacher training. This work is being done for all ages, but the real hope of revitalization is long-term and rests with the babies who are learning the rules of the language as well as thinking skills versus older learners who can simply gain words and awareness of Cherokee language.

Additional steps underway with Cherokee Preservation Foundation support include:

- ◆ A 10-year plan for language revitalization, which has been created by local leaders with the help of knowledgeable consultants.
- ◆ Travel to Oklahoma and Northeastern State University, which offers the nation’s only four-year degree that prepares students for K-12 teaching positions in Cherokee (speaking, reading, and writing as well as culture and heritage).
- ◆ Annual language symposium—“Three Tribes, One Language” to be held on May 24-25, 2007—which brings together the United Keetoowah Band and the Cherokee Nation from Oklahoma, and the Eastern Band to discuss the status of their language.



Ann Arneach teaching Cherokee to children; Renissa Walker with Abel Catolster at a Speakers Gathering

LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOLS

K-5 Immersion Academy – The Kituwah Institute of Culture and Language is scheduled to open in Fall 2008 in a new building on part of the Boundary Tree tract, which is being given for this purpose by the EBCI. A curriculum is being designed and a new director will be hired for this satellite program of the Cherokee Central Schools system.

Western Carolina University – A Cherokee Language Program Director was hired in August 2006 and works in these key areas:

- ◆ Creating a post-secondary degree program for future certified elementary education teachers of Cherokee language, including developing courses for Year 1, Year 2 and grammar as well as “conversational Cherokee” with Cherokee literature.
- ◆ Developing curriculum materials for use from the Pre-K immersion program through college level, including storybooks to textbooks that capture newly documented Cherokee words and phrases. One example is the joint work of WCU and KPEP on a book with illustrations and translations into phonetic and syllabary Cherokee of a traditional story about “how the possum lost its tail” which will be published this summer.
- ◆ Scholarships are available for future teachers of Cherokee language.

LANGUAGE IN THE COMMUNITY

Speakers gatherings – Once a month, 15 to 40 fluent speakers gather in a different community to use the Cherokee language. The events have grown each month since they started in April 2006. The gatherings serve as an important source of stories and word lists, which are shaped into curriculum materials for immersion classes. The gatherings also are a source of pride and fun for the elder speakers who find a sense of community and trust in the setting.

Community-based programs – The Snowbird community near Robbinsville is a model for how Cherokee language can be promoted within communities. An experienced teacher offers classes for beginners and advanced level, as well as a six-week summer camp. A Community Mobilization Coordinator has been hired and guidelines are being created so that other communities can have quality teaching materials and trained instructors.



Web-based learning – The new website www.fluent1.com is scheduled to launch this spring. Technology can be a great asset to language learning, experts say, because existing syllabary resources can be used and it saves the step of having to write everything down.

What does success look like?

We will track Cherokee language revitalization in future years, including:

- ◆ Growth in the Pre-K immersion program
- ◆ Launching of the K-5 academy program
- ◆ Course, curriculum, and materials development through WCU
- ◆ Increase in community programming
- ◆ Contexts for language use—where is Cherokee being spoken locally?

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Art is an underpinning of Cherokee culture that links hand-hewn beauty with the natural environment—whether it is a beautiful double-weave river cane basket, a white oak basket dyed with deep hues of butternut and bloodroot, or a stamped clay pot imprinted with traditional designs. The Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources (RTCAR) initiative is a multi-year effort to help restore the traditional Cherokee balance between maintaining and using natural resources. Funded by Cherokee Preservation Foundation through a grant to the Cherokee Studies Department at Western Carolina University, the goal of RTCAR is to protect and promote Cherokee traditional art, resources, and land care for present and future generations.

Since spring 2005, approximately \$1.5 million has been invested in 29 diverse RTCAR projects.



FOCUS: WHITE OAK FOR THE FUTURE

White oak used to flourish throughout the Southern Appalachian Mountains and has been used by generations of Cherokee in basket-making. Seasonal burning that was a custom in Cherokee culture allowed for the continuous regeneration of white oak stands. But with recent changes in land care management, white oak is no longer plentiful and its future as a basket resource is in jeopardy.

PROJECT STATUS:

An observant driver on Highway 19 between Cherokee and Bryson City might notice what appears to be a forest of plastic tubes sprouting across the road from the Cherokee Tribal Historical Preservation Office. This project is the work of the University of Tennessee, which has installed an experimental planting of 400



Experimental planting of white oak for basket-making

white oak trees in translucent plastic tubes. These tubes serve multiple purposes—protecting the trees from damage caused by animals while at the same time allowing in sunlight. Equally important, raising the white oak trees in tubes prevents branches from growing until the trees reach a certain height, resulting in higher quality splints for use in basket-making.

By using plastic tubes of different heights, researchers are trying to determine the optimal height for striking a balance between tree survival rates and quality splints for basket-making. The information gained from this study will help establish white oak plantings around in the region, which can ensure that there will be a quality resource for Cherokee artists into the future.



FOCUS: ON-THE-GROUND RIVER CANE INVENTORY

Supplying the future needs of Cherokee artists requires knowing how much of the resource is currently available. In the past, RTCAR has funded projects that established

baseline data on river cane using modern mapping techniques and GIS databases. But nothing beats boots-on-the-ground as a method for verifying both the quantity and quality of river cane available for use in basket-making. Once the source is identified, it must be communicated to cane harvesters for it to be of value. This is where the Appalachian Heritage Alliance comes in.

PROJECT STATUS:

The Appalachian Heritage Alliance is a small organization with a big mission. Through a grant from RTCAR, the Alliance is working with land owners, realtors, developers, and others in the community to document the location of existing cane breaks, and to get this information into the hands of local individuals and local organizations that need access to this resource. Using low-tech but highly effective methods, the Alliance has become an information clearinghouse on river cane. More river cane exists in the region than people are generally aware of, according to Alliance leaders, but additional work needs to be done to connect Cherokee cane harvesters with the private land owners who can provide access to it. Also, much of the existing river cane is threatened by development, so the Alliance works hard to harvest cane before it is destroyed. Earlier this year, the Alliance led a group of Cherokee cane harvesters to collect several hundred stems of exceptional quality in the Brasstown area. In the future, the Alliance plans to become more involved in river cane rescue—a process in which threatened cane is transplanted in order to save it.



FOCUS: STRENGTH THROUGH WORKING TOGETHER

Many individuals and organizations in the region are working to protect and strengthen traditional Cherokee resources. At the same time, the Cherokee people have long understood that the best results come when everyone works together toward a common goal.

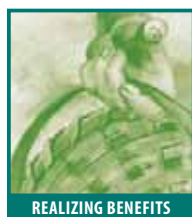
PROJECT STATUS:

RTCAR is increasing its focus on engaging the local community and making use of traditional knowledge. Last year, a local Cherokee leader joined the RTCAR staff and has helped with local outreach.



Debra Standingdeer of RTCAR (left) working with Agnes Reed of Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual

In addition, Cherokee artisans and elders have become more involved through a special Community Advisory Council. In April 2007, RTCAR held its first networking meeting, offering organizations that have received funding an opportunity to learn from each other and to figure out how to combine efforts. In the coming year, RTCAR will look for more opportunities to build on the work of the River Cane Research Station at Western Carolina University, the Little Tennessee Land Trust, the Appalachian Heritage Alliance, and other organizations and individuals that have expressed an interest in working together to identify, protect, and harvest Cherokee resources. RTCAR will also work closely with the newly formed Cherokee Seven Clans ga-du-gi, a nonprofit organization with the mission of generating good ideas and helping them grow into funded projects that benefit the community.



FOCUS: PARTNERSHIP PRODUCES SIGNIFICANT ARTISAN AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A partnership nurtured over the past five years with the Land Trust of the Little Tennessee (LTLT) has now reaped significant rewards in both environmental and cultural resources for the Cherokee.

PROJECT STATUS:

Through several grants, LTLT has helped preserve existing river cane breaks, established new cane plantings, and ensured high quality harvesting practices that will protect these resources for the long-term. Specifically, grants to LTLT have resulted in Cherokee artists harvesting approximately 300-400 river cane stems annually from land which is under the management of the Trust. Since over-harvesting could become an issue unless handled properly, the Trust has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual to make sure that cane is collected in a way that ensures a sustainable harvest for years to come. The Trust is also working to restore cane breaks to increase the amount and quality of river cane available in the future. This activity

comes at a time when there has been a revival of interest in traditional Cherokee basket-making, particularly the beautiful double-weave variety that uses local river cane. The Trust's efforts are critical because river cane habitat overall is in decline due to development and the expansion of agriculture in the valuable river bottoms where river cane prefers to grow.

LTLT's work extends beyond river cane to precious white oak and butternut reserves, which are also key to the future of Cherokee arts. And on a larger scale, the Trust played a leading role in this past year's conservation of 71 acres encompassing the historically and culturally significant Cowee Mound and the ancient town of Cowee. The mound is believed to date back 1,400 years and was the heart of the town of Cowee, once the chief commercial and diplomatic center of the mountain Cherokee in the 18th Century.



Cowee Mound area protected forever.

Credit: LTLT

For more information about Cherokee Preservation Foundation, visit us on the Web at www.cpdfn.org, or call (828) 497-5550. The Foundation is located at 71 John Crowe Hill Road, P.O. Box 504, Cherokee, NC 28719.

REGIONAL NETWORK HELPS SMALL BUSINESSES CONNECT WITH RESOURCES

The Cherokee Preservation Foundation focuses most of its resources on the Qualla Boundary, but also has the mission of improving its neighboring seven counties. One project supported by the Foundation has brought together over 20 agencies to form the Western North Carolina Business Assistance Providers (WNC-BAP) program. By joining forces to create a web site and communicate about their services, this group is helping local business people get the support they need.

"We know from research that nationally, there's a 40 to 50 percent survival rate for new businesses," said Greg Walker-Wilson, executive director of Mountain BizWorks (formerly Mountain Microenterprise Fund), the coordinating agency for the WNC-BAP project. "But we can increase that to 70 to 75 percent—the rate we see when we help folks access our services."

Qualla Financial Freedom, along with other groups located in Cherokee, participated in initial planning of the network effort. "It is so valuable to have a web site to assist community people with the challenges they face to get the information they need," said Roseanna Belt of Qualla Financial Freedom. "The WNC Business Assistance Providers program can save people aggravation as well as money and time."

Walker-Wilson said the participating groups from Cherokee and the surrounding seven county area get together twice a year to share information and coordinate their activities. They all know much more about how each other works and are better able to make referrals as a result. One outgrowth of the partnership is that a Mountain BizWorks

staff person has been through the Indianpreneurship training program at the Sequoyah Fund in an effort to better understand the needs of Cherokee businesses, Walker-Wilson said.

Agencies from Cherokee and Surrounding Seven-County Area Participating in WNC-BAP:

Cherokee County Economic Development Center, Murphy
Haywood Community College - Small Business Center, Waynesville
Mountain BizWorks, Sylva
Mountain Stewardship Alliance, Dillsboro
Native American Business Development Center, Cherokee
Office of Economic Opportunity, Murphy
Partnership for the Future of Bryson City and Swain County
Qualla Financial Freedom, Cherokee
Sequoyah Fund, Cherokee
Small Business and Technology Development Center, Cullowhee
Smoky Mountain Development Corporation, Waynesville
Southwestern Community College - Small Business Center, Bryson City
Tri-County Community College, Murphy
Vocational Rehab, Sylva

Go to the web site at www.wncbap.org for links to learn more about these agencies that can help build businesses in a variety of ways.