

# ᏧᏂᏂᏂᏂ - Togyasdi, Where They Race Boats

## Short Version

The Asheville Friends Meeting acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is ancestral land of the *Anikituwagi*, more commonly known as the Cherokee. We recognize the Cherokee as the native people and original stewards of this land. We also recognize all the varied Indigenous Peoples who have lived in and continue to live in and around these lands.

This land was known as Togyasdi, Where They Race Boats and was part of the Cherokee Nation, Tsalagi Ayeli. It covered as many as 108,000 square miles of the American Southeast as late as 1730 and consisted of sixty or more towns. The stories that come from this land teach how to live, interact and mutually care for all relations.

We understand that there is a need to listen and learn from the people of this land. We acknowledge that an act of recognition is not enough to overcome the settler-colonial history, defined as the introduction of a group of foreign peoples to a region by an imperialist state with the express desire to replace the native inhabitants with its own colonial peoples for economic, political, religious or social reasons. This effort usually involves the assimilation or destruction of native states and peoples in favor of a colonized governmental structure that is akin to the mother state of the colony.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Asheville Friends Meeting seek to affirm our work together to ensure a strong relationship rooted in relevancy, responsibility, respect and reciprocity. Therefore, we have a responsibility to commit our efforts and resources to the health and priorities of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and all the varied Indigenous people who live in and around the land on which we are situated. As these words are spoken and heard, we renew and reaffirm this property as Cherokee homelands.

## Full Version

The Asheville Friends Meeting acknowledges, with respect, that the land we are on today is ancestral land of the *Anikituwagi*, more commonly known as the Cherokee. We recognize the Cherokee as the native people and original stewards of this land. We also recognize all the varied Indigenous people who lived in and continue to live in and around these lands. The stories that come from this land teach how to live, interact and mutually care for all relations.

We understand that there is a need to listen and learn from the people of this land. Now known to many as Asheville, to the Anikituwagi this land is known as Togyasdi, Where They Race Boats. Sitting in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it was a place of Cherokee life, trade, ceremony and culture for many centuries. Togyasdi was part of the Cherokee Nation, Tsalagi Ayeli, which covered as many as 108,000 square miles of the American Southeast as late as 1730 and consisted of sixty or more towns, each autonomous but joined in ceremony and in times of war.

Thus, the story of the people from Kituwah neither begins or ends with the arrival of Europeans but intertwines and becomes a complex historical legacy that defines both Asheville Friends Meeting and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in the present.

For more than 10,000 years, Cherokees and their ancestors lived around the junction of the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers. The Cherokees agreed to major land cessions in treaties with settlers after thirty-six towns in addition to crops, livestock and winter food supplies were decimated. Cherokees held onto legal claim of the land west of the French Broad River, now part of Asheville, until 1791.

In 1791 after years of bloody conflict, invasion and colonization, leaders of the Cherokee Nation signed an agreement to cede more land to settlers so that all associated lands with the city now called Asheville, would be open to uncontested settlement. This treaty was negotiated in good faith to enforce the boundaries and sovereignty of the Cherokee Nation thus reinforcing a nation-to-nation relationship. Without the cession of land and the brutal years of conflict with the Cherokee that preceded it, the Asheville we know of today is unthinkable. The 1791 Agreement was designed to end war between the two nations and was not unique. It was one of over four hundred treaties with Native Nations in which the US government did not live up to the agreed terms. This broken treaty culminated in another decade of intermittent war and further theft of native lands.

Only within the lives of our grandfather's grandfathers, the forced Cherokee Removal, from these lands was an attempt by the US government to consign a people to oblivion, resulting in the genocidal march westward. Within the time of our grandfathers, policies were made to disassociate the Cherokee from their language, their faith and their identity as a people; with schools being a primary weapon used. That the Cherokee Anikituwagi persist as survivors, warriors, diplomats, mothers, doctors, aunts, teachers, artists and grandmothers is a testament to their resilience. The Qualla Boundary, the home of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, situated a mere fifty miles away, presents a reminder of this region's history.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Asheville Friends Meeting recognize this long history and seek to affirm our work together to ensure a strong relationship rooted in relevancy, responsibility, respect and reciprocity. Asheville Friends Meeting acknowledges that an act of recognition is not enough to overcome the settler-colonial history that we are all a part of. Therefore, we commit our efforts and resources to the health and priorities of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and all the varied Indigenous people who live in and around the land on which we are situated. As these words are spoken and heard, we renew and reaffirm this property as Cherokee homelands.