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Speakers can learn Cherokee language with a Tulsa City-County Library card

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Posted: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 1:25 pm

ULSA – As fluent speakers of Native American languages decline, efforts to save these valuable languages are increasing.

Tulsa City-County Library Chief Executive Officer Gary Shaffer saw an opportunity to advance the language preservation efforts of the Cherokee Nation, the largest Native American tribe in the U.S., with about 315,000 registered citizens around the world.

Through a collaboration of Tulsa City-County Library, the Cherokee Nation and Mango Languages, more people can now learn the Cherokee language from their home computer, laptop and mobile device.

The Mango Languages software is available to Tulsa City-County Library customers, www.tulsalibrary.org/language, as well as 3,000 other libraries nationwide, to learn to speak, read and write Cherokee.

Mango Languages is an online language-learning system that can help people learn by listening to native speakers and engaging in the interactive lessons offered through this user-friendly tool.

Shaffer, working with Teresa Runnels, Tulsa City-County Library's American Indian Resource Center coordinator, contacted the Cherokee Nation to form a language preservation partnership.

"The collaboration certainly would not have come about if it were not for the backing of Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker; the belief in the project exhibited by Dr. Candessa Tehee, director of the Cherokee Heritage Center; and Roy Boney Jr., Cherokee Language Program manager," said Shaffer. "We are excited to have helped bring the Cherokee language project to fruition and celebrate as library customers in Tulsa and around the world can now begin to learn Cherokee through Mango's free language-learning app available from their local public library website."

Throughout 2014, Mango worked with Cherokee elders Anna Sixkiller and John Ross to develop the language lessons. Sixkiller and Ross also are the voices heard during each conversational lesson.

"Anna and John each liked the process for the language lessons. It was a neat experience for them as first-language speakers to see what second-language learners go through to learn the Cherokee language," said Boney Jr.




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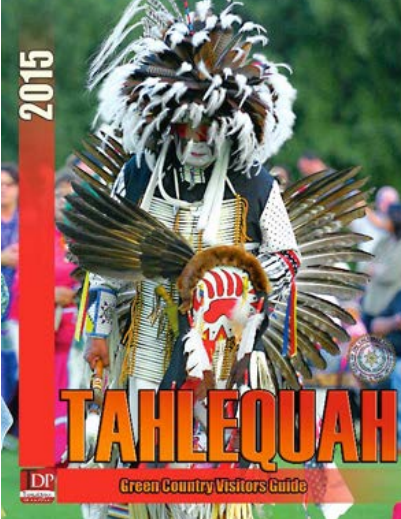


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They are two of the most trusted language experts the Cherokee Nation has. Both are designated as Cherokee Nation National Treasures."

Now that the language-learning app is available on Mango Languages, non-Cherokee's have commented this is the first time they have seen the Cherokee syllabary and some people are hearing the language for the first time.

"Mango Languages has made it possible for the tribe to reach a wider audience," said Boney Jr. "People are now getting library cards so they can use Mango Languages to learn Cherokee."

Mango Languages features more than 60 languages from around the world and continues to grow. Ideas for new languages and courses often begin with requests from libraries and curious learners.

"Mango is always listening for what new content our users want," said Robert Thayer, Mango Languages, Public Libraries Division director. "We're proud to offer lesser-known and endangered languages from across the globe. Given the positive response the Cherokee course has received, more Native American languages are definitely a possibility."

For more information on learning the Cherokee language, call the AskUs Hotline, 918-549-7323, or visit Tulsa City-County Library's online language learning center featuring Mango Languages, www.tulsalibrary.org/language.

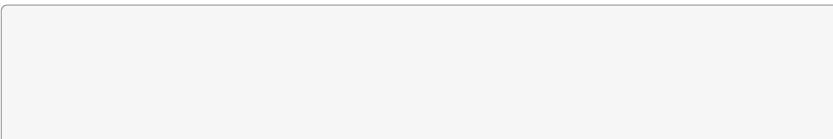
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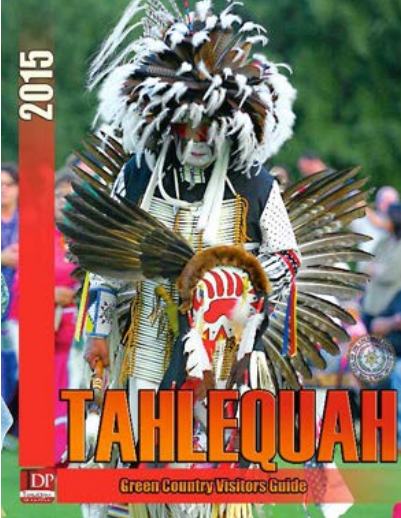
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