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Cherokee Linguist, Dancer to Appear at Natural Tunnel

Micah Swimmer, Cherokee language instructor for the Cherokee Central Schools in Cherokee, N.C., will present workshops on Cherokee language and dance on Saturday, Feb. 23, at the Cove Ridge Center, Natural Tunnel State Park, in Duffield, Va. The Cherokee Language Workshop will begin at 10 a.m. and the Family Dance Workshop will begin at 1 p.m. A general admission fee of \$5 covers attendance for one or both workshops. These workshops are sponsored by the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association in conjunction with Natural Tunnel State Park.

Swimmer graduated with honors from the Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kan., with a bachelor of arts degree in American Indian studies in 2008. He also holds an associate degree with honors in physical education from the same institution, and he is currently pursuing a master of arts degree in indigenous nations studies from the University of Kansas.

In addition to his teaching duties in the Cherokee Central Schools, Swimmer coaches football and basketball at the junior varsity and varsity levels and volunteers as a youth league coach. He is also a member of the highly respected Warriors of Anikituwah, which consists of modern warriors, appointed by the tribal council, to travel and to educate people about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians with the goal of preserving the traditional Cherokee language, songs and dances.

In discussing the importance of dance to his own family, Swimmer said that his late grandmother, Louise Bigmeat Maney, had her own dance group that consisted of family members. Swimmer's two older sisters and cousins participated in the group. At that time, numerous families had their own groups that would dance at the Fall Festival. His family has not had a dance group for 25 years, but he and his immediate family are working hard to bring back that tradition.

Swimmer will be accompanied at the workshops by his wife Carrah, daughter Tah-tah-yeh, and son Og-ga-na.

There will be an hour break between workshops. Participants may wish to bring a bag lunch. Fast food is also available two miles from the park in Duffield.

Funding for these workshops is provided by a National Endowment for the Arts grant to the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association through Roadside Theater, a division of Appalshop Inc. of Whitesburg, Ky.