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Jo Layne Kehle

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**THE LEADERSHIP OF ROSS O. SWIMMER 1975-1985:
A CASE STUDY OF A MODERN CHEROKEE PRINCIPAL CHIEF**

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by

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Dedication

This research project is a tribute to my parents: Allie Louvinue Johnson Sunday, and Clarence Floyd Sunday, who, after a life time together, learned to live in each other's world.

Both sides of my family, the White and the Indian, prized and continue to value education. There was, and never has been, such a thing as too much education. Once one family member reached a certain level up the ladder of learning, a stop was made to pull forward any family member left behind. This family tradition held firm in my quest to begin and complete this dissertation.

My sons, Peter Quinton Kehle, and Joel Ralph Kehle, provided a strong wind of encouragement – one that refused to leave my back. Without the enduring faith and deep pool of resources provided by my sister, Dr. Karen Sunday Cockrell, and my brother-in-law, Dr. Dan Cockrell, this manuscript would not exist. My Aunt Betty Jo Johnson was my treasure. Last, Eric, you were carried in my heart along this fascinating journey.

The central core of my family is touched and circled by an invisible outer band of the study's participants. Inestimable gratitude is owed to Ross and Margaret Swimmer, for their willing participation. Certainly the study's wonderful Cherokee participants, both tribal members and non-tribal members, are extended a personal "Thank You" for the contribution of their time, talent and information.

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

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The following study examined leadership characteristics of a modern leader of the Cherokee Nation, Ross O. Swimmer, during his three elections as Principal Chief, 1975-1985. Few Western scholars paid attention to the Cherokee Tribe after the break-up of institutions legislated by the federal Indian policy of Allotment. The position of the government was, the Cherokee Tribe no longer existed. For almost seventy years, no form of Cherokee leadership was visible; no Cherokee government existed. Federal Indian policy changed again, allowing tribes to elect their own leaders. This study began filling in gaps of missing information on modern Cherokee leadership by examining Swimmer's leadership characteristics. The study attempted to add to the body of leadership knowledge by mining minds and memories, searching for the meaning of leadership from a modern Cherokee perspective. The three questions guiding the study were: what were the leadership characteristics of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer; to what extent did these leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics; and from a tribal perspective, did these make a difference, and to what extent?

The data indicate seven Swimmer leadership characteristics: Visionary, Goal Oriented, Bureaucratic, Top-Down, Authoritarian, Delegator, and Communicator. There was inconsistency with Swimmer's use of traditional leadership practices. Swimmer used a combination of traditional Cherokee, traditional Native American, and Anglo-European-American leadership characteristics during his three terms as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Two possible explanations for Swimmer's blending leadership characteristics from varying models were suggested. First, given his bi-cultural heritage, Swimmer could navigate back and forth between the mainstream White culture and the traditional Cherokee culture, to pick and choose various types of leadership characteristics. Second, adaptability has always been a unique characteristic of the Cherokee people. Cherokee leaders frequently applied the feature of borrowing from White culture in order to adapt and survive.

Swimmer accomplished many of his goals for the Cherokee people and set the Nation on a path of growth and stability. His methods were not without criticism from traditional Cherokees. However, Swimmer built the foundation for a corporate government that instilled pride in the Cherokee people and provided opportunity for self-sufficiency.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

According to Parman and Price, Robert F. Berfkhofer, Jr. theorized that “historians have treated Indians – along with other minority groups – as ‘passive objects’ [within Anglo-European society] who produced no leaders of note, made no contributions to [Anglo-European society], and therefore deserved little attention in American history” (Parman & Price, 1989, p. 185). According to Josephy, non-Anglo-European cultures have legitimate ways of thinking about and looking at leadership, ways firmly grounded within their particular worldviews. As Josephy points out, “It takes a certain amount of sophistication to realize that the vision of others who see the world from different perspectives is just as valid as our own. One of the striking features of the administrative or bureaucratic mind is that it lacks such sophistication” (Josephy, 1971, p. 22).

Handed down from generation to generation are stories told by Cherokee elders about how Cherokees lived in the “Old Days” before they were removed from their original homelands during the years of 1838-1839 to their current home in Oklahoma. A “Cherokee legacy paid for with thousands of lives and millions of acres” (Smith, C.,

2002, p. 12). These stories are filled with recitals of Cherokee oral history and its lessons, carried over centuries, through the past and present voices of its people. Embedded within these stories are the names of and the roles played by Cherokee leaders (Starr, 1984; Mooney, 1982).

The survival of the Cherokee Nation provides a testament to the adaptability of the Cherokee people and their leaders. According to Strickland, whenever the Cherokee people would change and adapt, by necessity, to accommodate the demands of the federal government, “Whites stepped in, and, through force of arms or legislation, destroyed what the Cherokees had accomplished. The pattern was repeated again and again” (Strickland, 1982, p. 8).

This pattern of intrusion into Cherokee affairs began with English colonization that negatively affected the Cherokee government by creating deep divisions within the Cherokee Nation (Porter, 1997). Further key historical events that disrupted the Cherokee Nation’s formal leadership unfolded during three separate time periods in which the Cherokee people lost land and property (Strickland, 1982). First, in 1838, the U. S. federal government moved the Cherokees from their original homelands in Tennessee and Georgia, to present-day Northeastern Oklahoma. After emerging from the Trail of Tears experience, the Cherokee people, under the guidance of their leaders, were determined to rebuild their tribe. According to Debo, the Cherokee “made such remarkable social and political progress, they soon became known as [one] of the Five Civilized Tribes” (Debo, 1991, p. 5). In the 1860s, Cherokee territory was the site of many Civil War battles and the loss of many Cherokee lives. Because a number of

Cherokee leaders supported Confederate efforts, the Tribe bore the loss of land and property for a second time (Debo, 1991). Tasked with rebuilding once again, the Cherokee successfully reestablished their government. However, the Cherokee people were unsuccessful in their efforts to restrain the growing number of settlers who continued to seek access to Cherokee land. A complete dismantling of all Cherokee institutions under the Curtis Act of 1898 followed the breakup of Cherokee communally held Tribal lands under the Dawes Severalty Act or General Allotment Act of 1887.

Although the Dawes Act was actually passed eleven years prior to the Curtis Act of 1898, the Allotment process for the Five Civilized Tribes did not begin in full measure until the passage of the Curtis Act of 1898, as the Five Civilized Tribes were originally exempt from allotment. However, The Dawes Commission was created in 1893, to “persuade” the Five Civilized Tribes to agree to the allotment process, and the Commission began enrolling members of the Five Civilized Tribes to speed the breakup of their land holdings (Cockrell, 2007).

The federal policy known as Allotment created the legal mechanism by which allotments of land were given to each Tribal member (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993; Deloria & Lytle, 1984). After 160 acres of land were awarded to each head-of-household, 80 acres to a single Cherokee over eighteen years of age, the same to every orphan, and 40 acres to every Cherokee under the age of 18, the remaining Cherokee land (the surplus) was opened to White settlement. The federal policy of Allotment instantaneously impoverished the Cherokee.

For almost seventy years, from approximately 1900 to 1970, the Cherokee Nation, under formal leadership, did not exist (O'Brien, 1989; Debo, 1991). Little is known about Cherokee leadership during this seventy-year period. However, the Cherokee Nation survived under a cloak of intentional invisibility (Wahrhaftig, 2007). During this period of relative silence, subtle adjustments were made to Cherokee traditional leadership practices to accommodate the individualistic, capitalistic ways of the Whites (Porter, 1997). The Cherokee appeared to have a natural genius for politics. According to Debo, "Trained through countless generations in the proud democracy of primitive councils, they found their borrowed Anglo-American institutions in perfect harmony with their native development" (Debo, 1991, p. 9). However, Debo also found the Cherokee people were deficient in practical judgment and business ability (Debo, 1991, p. 10).

In 1970, federal Indian policy changed once again, and the members of the Cherokee Nation were given the right to reorganize and elect their own Principal Chief. The first modern Cherokee elected Principal Chief was W. W. Keeler, the former President of Phillips Petroleum Company. (Although Keeler was the first "modern" elected Principal Chief, he was considered culturally traditional by many Cherokee people.) Keeler served from 1971-1975. Ross O. Swimmer was elected in 1975, and resigned in 1985, to become head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Wilma Mankiller, Deputy Chief during Chief Swimmer's tenure, not only became Principal Chief by Cherokee constitutional law, she became the first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and was elected thereafter to three additional terms of office (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993).

Because the researcher grew up in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation, she heard the stories of adaptation and change; and these stories comprise a sizable portion of the researcher's family history. In early adulthood, however, life circumstances led the researcher to the world outside of Tahlequah. Experiences gained from stepping outside the boundary line of the Cherokee Nation suggested to the researcher that the outside world knew very little about the Cherokee people.

As the years and experiences of the researcher continued and grew, the gap in knowledge by the general public regarding the American Indian became increasingly evident to her. First, the researcher noticed a lack of information in most history books about the cultures and histories of American Indians in general, or Cherokees in particular. Next came the realization that American Indian leaders mentioned in books or seen in popular films were represented as conquered leaders of the past. In addition, Americans tended to group Indians together, as if they belonged to only one nation or one culture. Weaver (2001) explains that Indians see “. . . themselves as members of their own Nations rather than members of a larger group represented by the *umbrella* term Native American” (p. 242). Horse (2005) emphasizes: “We are Kiowa, Navajo, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, and so on” (p. 61). Similarly, Cherokee people see themselves not as Indians, but as members of the Cherokee Nation.

The researcher's awareness grew about how people of all ages knew little about the sacrifices and contributions Cherokee people have made to the growth and development of the United States, and knew little about how the Nation experienced

centuries of suffering to survive. The Cherokee people's remarkable accomplishments under the guidance of their leaders are an "eloquent testimony to what William Faulkner described as the enduring spirit of man" (Strickland, 1982, p. 3).

In 1971, starting with one employee, the Cherokee Nation began a journey on its most current road to rebuilding, once again, the Cherokee Nation. Under the current leadership of Principal Chief Chad Smith, the Cherokee Nation employs 6,500 people (<http://www.ChadSmith.com/WhatWeCanDo.htm>, p. 1). This extraordinary growth process found its footing during the term of service of a modern day Principal Chief: Ross O. Swimmer.

Statement of the Problem

Prominent leadership theories of today are the product of past, current and ongoing academic research presented from a European-American viewpoint (Smith, 2005). Furthermore, the recognized leadership theories of today are largely based on a White worldview, which means that non-White perspectives are often absent or distorted. Academic research would benefit from a paradigm shift in the ways that we investigate, understand and study leadership (Bernal, 1998, p. 123). According to Bernal, Thomas Kuhn presented a model in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* for a fundamental change in theories and scientific paradigms, arguing that, "Without major paradigm shifts we may never understand certain scientific phenomena" (Bernal, 1998, p. 123). Kuhn's logic might transfer to the study of leadership as well. Kuhn's hypothesis suggests that a paradigm based solely on Anglo-European-American leadership styles (which exclude Native American leadership characteristics) constrains the study of leadership. The

examination of leadership should not be forced into or limited by the paradigm of a single worldview.

Centuries before academia's interest in leadership, hundreds of tribal governments, under the guidance of their leaders, were successfully operating on this continent (O'Brien, 1989). However, inquiries encompassing an American Indian worldview of leadership theory are missing from the prominent academic literature. The voices of American Indian leaders appear to be absent from the discourse on leadership; and, if such is the case, these voices need to be identified and highlighted.

Additionally, aspects and application of leadership from the worldview of the Cherokee, specifically an application made in modern time, or the Modern Age, need to be examined. As Ward (2003) posits, "Another name for the Modern Age is *modernity*. Modernity is connected to the idea of modernization. Modernization suggests updating something, bringing something into line with present day needs" (Ward, p. 11).

Co-existing with the problem of leadership theories developed only from an Anglo-European perspective is America's continuing penchant for perpetuating the myth of the "Vanishing American." Lee explains that Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa), one of this country's most prolific Native American writers, currently professor emeritus at the University of California Berkeley, steadfastly rejected the "Vanishing American" ethos. Instead, Vizenor identified this ethos "as a mix of romanticized victimry and belief in 'Indians' as fixed (heroically or otherwise)" (Vizenor & Lee, 1999, p. 4). This is not to say that the Cherokee have not been studied. Current evidence of this phenomenon appeared in Penguin's new Library of American Indian History announcing the

publication of its first two books: *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears* (Perdue & Green, 2007) and *The Shawnees and the War for America* (Calloway, 2007). As historically customary, Gathman's review (2007) indicates both books are set in the 18th and 19th centuries (*Austin American Statesman*, Sunday, August 12, 2007, p. J5).

Bass cautions that the study of leadership is highly fluid. From the moment of one's reading his classic, comprehensive leadership survey, Bass reminds his reading audience that the findings of the survey are more than likely outdated due to the results of current, ongoing studies. However, Bass's seminal book supports the impression there is a limited amount of Native American leadership discourse found in the literature. Bass's chapter on *Leadership, Blacks, Hispanics, and Other Minorities* contains five paragraphs devoted to Native Americans. It begins: "Little can be said about this country's most impoverished minority, whose members are undereducated [in Anglo-European ways and culture] and live mainly under tribal councils that discourage participatory democracy and collaborate with state bureaucracies to maintain the status quo. The leadership of their many famous chiefs of the past is only a memory" (Bass, 1990, p. 755).

Bass is correct in stating, "The observed leadership tends to differ from one tribal culture to another" (Bass, 1990 p. 755). However, when referencing the work of Dekin (1985), Bass used the remaining paragraphs to illustrate leadership in one tribal group: the Inupiate of Alaska. It is a fair question to ask why one of the several hundred tribes in the other United States was not selected for a leadership discussion.

This researcher believes that such skimpy attention to Native American leadership not only perpetuates the missing gap in information on Native American leadership

(specifically, Cherokee leadership), but also prolongs the myth of the “Vanishing American,” and prevents us from knowing clearly the Cherokee perspective of leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership characteristics of one Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, namely, Ross O. Swimmer, during his administration. Following the appointment of W. W. Keeler as Chief of the Cherokee Nation by President Harry Truman (1949), President Richard M. Nixon (1970) ended the federal government’s Indian policy of Termination (1945-1961). A new Indian policy of Self-Determination (1961) characterized the awakening of America’s social conscience. A major consequence of the repudiation of Termination was to allow the Indian tribes to elect their own leaders. In 1971, W. W. Keeler became the first elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation since Oklahoma statehood (1907). W. W. Keeler provided the initial leadership necessary for Ross Swimmer, the following elected leader, to continue the successful rebuilding of the Cherokee Nation (Deloria & Lytle, 1984; Conley, 2005; Mankiller & Wallis, 1993).

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the researcher examined the administration of one modern Cherokee Chief, Ross O. Swimmer, and examined the existence or absence of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics. Perhaps many such traditional leadership characteristics, evidenced in or by practice, survived intact and were utilized. Perhaps, by necessity, the Chief blended and incorporated both traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics and Anglo-European-American styles of leadership with his

actions as a Cherokee leader. Possibly, traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics were absent in Swimmer's leadership decisions. This study attempts to add to the body of leadership knowledge by mining minds and memories, and searching for the meaning of leadership from a modern Cherokee perspective.

The Research Questions

The case study examines the nature of modern Cherokee leadership during a past time period, 1975-1985, through the lens of one Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation: Ross O. Swimmer. The research questions for the study were:

1. What were the leadership characteristics of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer?
2. To what extent did these leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics?
3. From a tribal perspective, did these make a difference? To What Extent?

Lending itself to qualitative research, this study attempted to understand Cherokee leadership during a past time period, 1975-1985. The research data collected relied on the memories of the various actors; and came from the stories, actions and lives of people during an identified time period.

Three types of collected data were utilized to provide a better understanding and interpretation of Cherokee leadership at a defined point in time, and in a certain context. According to Patton, three sources of data collection utilized in qualitative research are: "In-depth, open-ended interviews; [the power of] observation; and third, written documents" (Patton, 2002, p. 4).

The *Cherokee Column*, written weekly by Principal Chief Swimmer, from 1976-1985, and published in *The Cherokee Nation News*, “*The Official Publication of The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*” (later in the *Cherokee Voices* and the *Cherokee Advocate*), provided a communication source for using the process of content analysis. Comparing Swimmer’s conveyance of leadership logic over time revealed a discursive style of developing leadership characteristics (Thomas & Brubaker, 2002). The topics addressed by Swimmer not only provided necessary information for the Cherokee people, but the subjects were wide-ranging. An additional feature of Swimmer’s *Cherokee Columns* was the benefit of furnishing a glimpse into the maturation of a Cherokee leader, Ross Swimmer, over a ten-year time period.

The tool of content analysis was applied to the recorded interviews with Ross O. Swimmer; his wife, Margaret Swimmer; three elected members of his Council, five tribal employees, and two community elders of the time period. Nine interview participants were enrolled Cherokees; three were not. In analyzing their interviews, two values of communication were addressed: descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive analysis focused on what the communication contained, whereas interpretive analysis searched for meaning (Thomas & Brubaker, 2002). The study was primarily conducted in its natural setting, the Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. One interview was held in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The interviews with Ross Swimmer and Margaret Swimmer took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Accommodating the schedule of another participant, his interview was also conducted in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Two interviews were held by telephone. The remaining interviews were conducted in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Using the basic tools of qualitative research, the researcher conducted a case study of one Cherokee Principal Chief, Ross Swimmer, in an effort to determine (1) if Cherokee traditional leadership characteristics still survive; (2) if these traditional leadership characteristics share similarities with leadership characteristics identified in the existing Anglo-European body of knowledge on leadership, and (3) if these traditional leadership characteristics significantly add to the current body of leadership knowledge.

Limitations

Although a continual check was made for presence of researcher bias, bias was probably present at the subconscious level due to the researcher's life history. The researcher's connection with the Cherokee Nation is addressed in more detail in Chapter III.

Researchers seeking to explore Native American leadership must deal with "bits and pieces of evidence" available to them (Strickland, 1982, p. ix). In the past, collecting and analyzing American Indian stories was burdensome because of limited evidence. In the main, the stories have been left untold. A precedent was established. This pattern has continued to the present time. Lack of recorded source material, coupled with the fact that Indian cultures are oral in nature, created a problem of locating information. According to Neil Morton (study participant), obtaining information from the time period of interest can be confusing. Getting the time sequence of events in their proper order and obtaining correct information is quite difficult, as "little was written down."

What illumination this study might offer about the Cherokee, or what knowledge might be added to existing leadership theory, is intended to reflect the worldview of Cherokee leaders and not extend to other tribes.

Delimitations

According to Deloria: “It is impossible to understand American Indians in their contemporary setting without first gaining some knowledge of their history as it has been formed and shaped by the Indian experience with Western civilization” (Deloria & Lytle, 1984, p. 1). It should also be understood that the Cherokee Nation, and all other American Indian Nations in the United States, have a long and complicated history.

A historical overview of the Cherokee Nation before Removal from the Southeastern part of the United States (1838) is given and used as the beginning to the story. According to Gardner, “Historical forces create the circumstances in which leaders emerge, but the characteristics of the particular leader in turn have their impact on history” (Gardner, 1986, p. 10). In other words, it is the forces of history that determine the rise or fall of the leader. However, the scope of the study is primarily driven by data collected from the years Ross O. Swimmer was in office.

Assumptions

It was assumed the Cherokee people wanted to have their modern leaders and leadership theories, practices and characteristics defined from the Cherokee point of view. Several of the Cherokee people interviewed in the course of this study stated, “The Cherokee story needs to be told.” As one former Cherokee Councilman said to me, “Fair’s fair, you know. You need to go both ways, and let the people decide who read it.”

As importantly, one Cherokee elder told me, “You share. You trust. You see, you expect a Cherokee – well, you see, I was so happy to help you. I will do what I can to help the Cherokees because it’s the way you do. It is the Cherokee way” (personal interview with Cherokee elder, March 24, 2008). According to Deloria, “Contemporary Indian leadership was suppressed by tales of the folk heroes of the past” (Deloria, 1988, p. 202). We need to illuminate contemporary Indian leadership.

A corollary assumption was that Americans who are descendents of Anglo-European-Americans are interested in learning from Cherokee leaders about Cherokee leadership characteristics. It was also assumed that themes of interest would emerge as opposed to being identified *a priori*. Creswell states, “This emergence provides rich ‘context-bound’ information leading to patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon” (Creswell, 1994, p. 7).

Significance of the Study

According to O’Brien, when the Europeans “discovered” the new world, there were more than six hundred tribes living on the continent, and each tribe had its own traditional tribal government. These tribal governments “shared certain values, ideas of leadership, and styles of decision making” (O’Brien, 1989, p. 14). Throughout the following centuries, the federal government implemented a variety of policies with the distinct intent of destroying the tribes, their cultures, and their leaders.

Because the Native American tribes, including the Cherokee, have survived, it is probable there are characteristics and qualities of leadership still held and practiced by the Cherokee that are of value and worthy of study. The intent of this work is to add to

the current body of knowledge on leadership. The leadership theories developed so far, along with those evolving, represent primarily the perspective of a single worldview – Anglo-European-American.

By the study of the leadership characteristics of one modern Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Ross O. Swimmer, the researcher opens the door to his participation in the current leadership dialogue. A study of Ross Swimmer’s leadership style can be added to today’s theories of leadership in an effort to expand understanding.

Last, the proposed study was driven by a goal of the researcher’s personal interest in uncovering the story of leadership during the administrations of a Cherokee Principal Chief. As Patton said, “*She wanted to know because she wanted to know*” (Patton, 2002, p. 12). Too, it brought the researcher great satisfaction to have the opportunity to continue the time-honored practice of Cherokee storytelling for the purpose of educating.

Definition of Terms

American Indian – Among the Indians themselves, generally, “Those born before 1950 tend to be comfortable with being called American Indian” (Horse, 2005, p. 66).

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (1824) – A Bureau of Indian Affairs was established within the War Department (Steiner, S., 1968, p. 319).

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (1849) – the Bureau of Indian Affairs was transferred to the Department of the Interior (Steiner, S. 1968. p. 321).

Cobell, Eloise – Member of Blackfeet Nation of Montana. Lead plaintiff in class action \$137 billion lawsuit (Cobell v. Kempthorne) filed against federal government on behalf of 280,000 American Indians. The suit dates back to the 1887 Dawes Act,

claiming records for Indian Trust lands were improperly administered. Lease monies for Indian interests in oil, grazing and timber are involved (www.indiantrust.com, p. 1).

Five Civilized Tribes – The Seminole, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and Cherokee – so named to distinguish them from the Plains Indians (Deloria, V. Jr., 1988, p. 115).

Indian – “My first concern is with the word *Indian*. I have seen books and articles that use the terms Amerindian and Native American. I am not sure where these terms came from. I would guess that white academics, or possibly Indian academics, made them up. I have never heard an Indian outside the university community call himself anything but an Indian” (Velie, 1982, p. 4).

Indian Reorganization Act (1934) – Also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act. Allotment was formally ended. Allowing for the tribes to re-organize under their own constitutions and by-laws, tribal governments came under increased BIA supervision (Deloria & Lytle, 1984, pp. 14-15).

Keetoowah Society – Secret Cherokee society, formed in 1859, with the purpose of protecting Cherokee community and national interests, Cherokee history, spiritual, medical, and organization knowledge (Starr, 1984, p. 143).

Leadership – Many attempts have been made to define the concept of leadership, resulting in a host of definitions. The meanings of leadership overlap and are confusing. However, similarities in these meanings allow for the following rough scheme of classification: “Group processes, personality, compliance, influence, particular behaviors, persuasion, power, instrument to goal achievement, effect of interaction,

differentiated role, initiation of structure, and ‘many combinations of these definitions’” (Bass, 1990, p. 11).

Leadership Characteristics – Gardner’s list of leadership attributes (characteristics): “Physical vitality and stamina; Intelligence and judgment-in-action; Willingness (eagerness) to accept responsibility; Task competence; Understanding of followers/constituents and their needs; Skill in dealing with people; Need to achieve; Capacity to motivate; Courage, resolution, steadiness; Capacity to win and hold trust; Capacity to manage, decide, set priorities; Ascendance, dominance, assertiveness; Adaptability, flexibility of approach” (Gardner, 1987, pp. 12-17).

Leadership Practices – Leadership practices, as the researcher uses the term, is intended as a way of doing (practicing) what is customary in accordance with a society’s worldview.

Native American – (Indians) “born later in the twentieth century seem accustomed to the term Native American” (Horse, 2005, p. 66).

Old Nation – Reference by traditional Cherokees to the Cherokee Nation before Removal to present day Oklahoma.

Qualitative Research – Merriam (2002) cites Patton (1985, p. 1) . . . Qualitative research “is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting . . .” (p. 5).

Quantitative Research – “Involves amounts, which are usually cast in the form of statistics” (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000, p. 11).

Removal – Refers to the forced march of the Cherokee people from the Southeastern part of the United States to Indian Territory in 1836. Also known as The Trail of Tears (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993, p. 266).

Self-Determination (1961-Present) – When Richard Nixon repudiated the Indian Termination Policy (1970) to Congress, Native Americans became a part of the Great Society Program (Deloria & Lytle, 1984, pp. 21-24).

Termination Policy (1945-1961) – Implemented immediately after WWII, this policy called for an end to all federal assistance to Indian tribes (Deloria & Lytle, 1984, pp. 15-21).

The Curtis Act (1898) – “Abolishes tribal courts and laws, but allows Native American Nations to retain mineral rights to their lands, and extends the allotment policy to the Five Tribes in Indian Territory. The Dawes Commission begins to enroll members on tribal rolls” (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993, p. 268).

The Dawes Commission (1893) – Established by Congress to negate title to lands held by the Five Civilized Tribes (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993, p. 268).

The Dawes Severalty Act, or the “Allotment Act” (1887) – was passed in Congress to divide up Indian lands to individuals (Steiner, S., 1968, p. 321). Also referred to as the General Allotment Act (Mankiller & Wallis, 1993, p. 285).

Traditional Cherokee Leadership Characteristics – Harmony centered; significant spiritual component, consensus ruled, avoidance of open conflict, political authority

vested in the community and not the individual, self interests sublimated in the interest of community, leaders chosen based on competence, led by example rather than authority or command, decisions took time; their word was binding (Buchanan, 1972; Persico, 1981; Spindler, 1957).

Traditional Native American Leadership – Characterized by spirituality, generosity, teaching, servant; no one person was always a leader; leading by example, chosen by the community, taking time with decisions as their word was a binding pledge, led by consensus; conflict resolution based on restitution rather than retribution (American Indian Policy Center [AIPC], 2005; retrieved from <http://www.airpi.org/research/tdlead.html>, p. 2-4). The act of transmitting traditions and beliefs from one generation to the next (AIPC, 2002).

Summary

Physically, socially, culturally and psychologically, the Native American tribes were conquered by the Anglo-European/Anglo-American. Most (or many) Whites believed the Indian tribes to have vanished, the Cherokee in particular as of 1907. Yet, the majority of the tribes have adapted and survived. Little is known about how their leaders accomplished tribal survival. What is known is written mainly from a White perspective (Mihsuah, 1998).

Coupled with the problem of a void on current Indian leadership research is an absence of the Indian voice on leadership from the Native American perspective. According to Fixico (Mihsuah, 1998), “Whether racially prejudiced or guilt-ridden, patronizing, paternalistic, or romantic, Indian history mainly has been perceived from a

white perspective, based on the idea that ‘the conquerors write the history.’ More than 30,000 manuscripts have been published about American Indians, and more than ninety percent of that literature has been written by non-Indians” (p. 86).

Chapter II initiates a discussion of Anglo-European-American leadership theories and characteristics, traditional Native American leadership characteristics, and traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics. The Indian leadership style differed dramatically from the Anglo-European bureaucratic, authoritarian style, where decisions came from the top-down and were not community-based or made by consensus. In the Anglo-European view, the focus was on the individual, competition, materialism, and individual ownership of land. The Europeans brought with them technical efficiency, a hierarchical structure, a division of labor, control by rules, and impersonal relationships (Hanson, 2003. p. 16).

If traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics survived, what knowledge, direction and strength did they provide Ross Swimmer, in his role as a leader, toward re-organizing and re-building the Cherokee Nation? What traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics blended with Anglo-European/American leadership theories, and were used by Swimmer? The successful growth of the Cherokee Nation would indicate that Swimmer was a successful leader. In what way can the leadership characteristics of Ross Swimmer contribute to the current base of leadership knowledge? Members of the Cherokee Nation want to share their knowledge of leadership. What is unclear is whether current leadership theorists welcome new insights.

CHAPTER II

Review of The Literature

One friend of mine, a Seneca scholar, once remarked that many people have a mental snapshot of native people taken three hundred years ago, and they want to retain that image (Mankiller, 1993, p. 22).

Introduction

“People have been interested in leadership since the beginning of recorded history” (Yukl, 2006, p. 457). The world has been preoccupied with the study of leadership since the emergence of civilization. “The study of leadership has figured prominently in the quest for knowledge” (Bass, 1990, p. 3). However, Yukl states, “The study of leadership as a scientific discipline [only] started more than half a century ago” (p. 457). Since then, the research, which has produced massive amounts of literature on the topic, has not yielded unified conclusions. As Yukl suggests, while progress toward less theoretical fragmentation is being made, the results are plagued with confusion and ambiguity.

The existing body of academic research on leadership reveals scholarly publications to be almost exclusively the work of Western scholars who typically represent Western science and a Euro-American worldview. The tradition of ignoring or discounting the voices of other worldviews as unauthentic or non-qualified for participation limits the search for knowledge. An intentional or even a non-intentional exclusion of non-traditional ways of knowing limits the scope and ability to view a full range of leadership practices which function under different sets of rules and values – or, worldviews. Weatherford suggests the Western worldview may be hurting itself by

excluding the study of Native American leadership practices, “for each culture creates the world in a different way with unique knowledge, unique words, and unique understandings” (Weatherford, 1988, p. 253-254).

An overabundance of literature exists, formulating and discussing the developed and emerging theories on leadership from the White perspective. However, the scarcity of literature available addressing leadership from the Native American worldview creates a gap of knowledge. “There is a paucity of research on Indian leadership. The role of culture has largely been ignored in the study of [Indian] leadership” (Louie, 1997, p. 41).

When narrowing one’s search in the literature to a specific tribe, the Cherokee, available resources are further diminished. Compounding the problem of inadequate research is an attempt to focus on one tribe, the Cherokee, with a concentration of their leadership in modern times. Academic research on current Cherokee leadership is almost non-existent.

A number of areas form the bases of this review of the literature. These include: (1) Prominent Anglo-American Theories of Leadership; (2) Traditional Native American Leadership; (3) Suggested Reasons for the Scarcity of Information on Native American Leadership, and (4) The Cherokee.

Prominent Anglo-American Theories of Leadership

The Great Man or Trait Leadership Theory

“The Great Man” theory of leadership (Hanson, 2003), or Trait Theory (Yukl, 2006), was popular during the first half of the twentieth century. It was believed that leadership traits in an individual, particularly a man, would manifest themselves “without

regard to the situation in which the person was functioning” (Gardner, 1993, p. 6). Leadership was an elitist concept. As Hanson (2003) notes, it “fit neatly with the classical organization theory of the time” (p. 182). In his studies of American organizations and their leaders, Gardner developed a list of leader attributes. A frequent criticism of Gardner’s list concerns its tendency toward the male-centeredness of its list of leadership characteristics.

While this idea of superiority, held in the Great Man theory, eventually fell into academic disfavor, the traits of leadership have not completely lost their importance to the subject of leadership (Bass, 1990).

Behaviors Leadership Theory

During the 1950s and early 1960s, leadership studies moved from the leaders to leadership and style. Blake and Mouton (1964) focused on task versus a leader’s concern for people. McGregor’s work (1960) concentrated on centralized authority leadership compared with participative leadership. The two groups contrasted were labeled “Theory X or Theory Y.” After inconsistencies in the studies became apparent, researchers realized they were overlooking the effects of environment. Many theorists began to argue that leaders emerged from the situation – the time, the place, and the circumstance.

Situational Leadership Theory

Factoring in context, researchers began to include situations into the task of defining leadership. In other words, different contexts would require different types of leaders to meet the requirements of the situation. From this thinking emerged a contingency approach. Fiedler postulated a contingency model containing three important conditions:

1. The relationship between the leaders and followers. If leaders are liked and respected, they are more likely to have the support of others.
2. The structure of the task. If the task is clearly spelled out as to goals, methods and standards of performance, then it is more likely that leaders will be able to exert influence.
3. Position of power. If an organization or group confers power on leaders for the purpose of getting the job done, the influence of the leader may be increased (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987, pp. 51-67; Fiedler, 1997).

Hersey and Blanchard (1977) became influential situation theorists. They developed a model which included four different leadership styles to deal with particular situations: (1) depending on the situation, the leaders told the follower what to do; (2) coaching or selling employees on the task to be done; (3) sharing the decision-making process between leader and follower; and (4) after the problem was identified by the leaders, the task was delegated to the follower.

However, some research colleagues have faulted Hersey and Blanchard's model. For example, Doyle and Smith (2001) pointed out a weakness of the various Hersey and Blanchard situation models:

First, much that has been written has a North American bias. There is a lot of evidence to suggest cultural factors influence the way that people carry out, and respond to, different leadership styles. For example, some cultures are more individualistic, or value family as against bureaucratic models, or have very different expectations about how people address and talk with each other. All this impacts on the choice of style and approach (http://www.infed.org/leadership/traditional_leadership.htm, p. 6).

Second, women in leadership positions are said to look to relationships. Men are thought to look to style. There is ongoing debate on this issue. Third, Bolman and Deal (2003) commented, "Hersey and Blanchard focus mostly on the relationship between managers and immediate subordinates, and say little about issues of structure, politics, or symbols" (p. 344).

Transformation Leadership Theory

This body of research is presently active with refining the blurred lines between the definitions of transactional and transformational leadership. James Burns is credited with providing the concepts and language for this theory (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Hanson, 2003).

Transactional is the term given to define earlier situation leadership characteristics. By meeting various self-interests of employees or followers, a leader exchanges rewards for their effort. Bolman and Deal (2003) cite Burns (1978) to explain a new distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Burns theorized, “Transactional leaders approach their followers with an [eye] to trading one thing for another; jobs for votes, subsidies for campaign contributions” (p. 4). Burns described transforming leaders to be rare, visionary, symbolic leaders, following a “consistent set of practices and rules” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 361). According to Bass (1990), “Burns (1978) believed that transformational leadership and transactional leadership are at opposite ends of a continuum” (p. 220).

Although researchers have been grappling with the question of what leadership is, an ancillary question addressed by leadership studies is, what is effective leadership? Gardner points out the fact that leadership is dispersed throughout society. Effective leaders are needed in “government, business, organized labor, the professions, the minority communities, the universities, social agencies, schools” (Gardner, 1986, p. 17), throughout every level of our societal and institutional system. As studies have

continued, new leadership theories have been suggested for consideration. One example is a theory of Participative Leadership.

Participative Leadership Theory

Leithwood and Duke (1998) credit Yukl (1994) with adopting the term “Participative Leadership” (Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p. 38). According to Bass, participative leadership suggests increased worker autonomy, “power sharing, information sharing, and due process” (Bass, 1990, p. 437). Participative leadership denotes a characteristic of democratic leadership. Research indicates worker satisfaction as a strength. This positive feature can be counterbalanced by indications of workers feeling they lack authority to match delegated responsibilities (Bass, 1990). According to Leithwood and Duke, participative leadership, however, “is also presumed to lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness, and better outcomes” (Leithwood & Duke, 1998, p. 40).

The Characteristics of Authority and Power in Leadership

To introduce the topic of authority and power, a good place to begin is to state what these two characteristics of leadership are not. Examples of powerful people can be found in the absence of leadership. For instance, an authoritarian parent or teacher is thought of as having power but not necessarily leadership.

Official authority, like that found enforcing the rules of bureaucracies, has power. The Internal Revenue Service, for example, has the authority to audit a citizen’s tax returns. However, the auditor is not viewed as a leader (Gardner, 1993). Morgan’s exploration of power theory (1998) diverges in degree from Gardner, in that Morgan

agrees, “Formal authority is a form of legitimized power” (p. 163), but it is recognized and respected as a right with a concomitant duty to obey.

Finding clear and consistent, definitions for authority and power continues to be a problem. When power and authority are “seen,” though, they are readily categorized.

Gardner finds sources of power in:

- (1) Strength, as in the act of physical coercion;
- (2) Leaders adhering to custom or tradition;
- (3) The establishment of organizations and institutions to confer power;
- (4) Belief systems of organizations, institutions, communities, or nations, hold a key to power sources;
- (5) The phrase, “the power of public opinion,” is often heard. A leader dismisses public opinion at his or her peril;
- (6) Adept leaders are the guardians of symbols. Their awareness of the public’s recognition of the value of cultural symbols is a potent and intelligent use of power;
- (7) The power of information can be de-linked from the power of public opinion and viewed separately when recognizing that having current and accurate intelligence and knowledge is power. From the pedestrian practice of withholding the latest gossip to maintain a position of power, to a country’s edge in science and technology, authority and power are understood;
- (8) Economic power is a valuable property. The power of money is well understood, from the individual to a nation. While money buys power, however, it cannot buy leadership (Gardner, 1993, p. 59-64).

In contrast, “Indigenous notions [of power] are defined as being rooted in concepts of respect, balance, reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence” (Grande, 2004, p. 61).

Charisma and Charismatic Leadership

St. Paul is believed to have originated the term charisma with the idea of charisma, or gifts and powers, emanating from the “manifestations of God’s grace” (Gardner, 2003, p. 34). Throughout history, the term has been borrowed by many theologians, philosophers, historians and academic theorists, and retranslated. Classical

organizational theorist Max Weber is known for having defined charisma to mean leaders who are “particularly likely to emerge in times of physical, economic, religious or political distress” (Gardner, 2003, p. 34). The concept of charisma continues to survive, and retains much of the meaning given by Weber.

However, Weber added traditional and legal-rational to charismatic, to complete his theory of authority. In Weber’s model, vision and mission defined the charismatic leader; traditional authority was legitimized by the sanctity of tradition. The legal-rational leader’s authority came from the content of the law and its set of principles. Weber believed that bureaucracy, whether political or economic, was the “best example of legal-rational authority” (Weber, 1958, p. 3; <http://danawilliams2.tripod.com/authority.html>).

Weber viewed charisma as having an aspect of domination, giving leaders the formal authority, or right to rule, leaving their followers with a duty to obey (Morgan, 1998, p. 262). Whether the domination was charismatic, traditional, or rational-legal, Weber was concerned with “the trend toward increasing bureaucratization and rationalization, which he saw as a very great threat to the freedom of the human spirit and the values of liberal democracy” (Morgan, p. 263). Weber came to view bureaucracy as an “iron cage” (Morgan, p. 263).

The concept of charismatic leadership has been broadened by theorists, and applied to many situations in their efforts to better understand leaders and leadership. The concept has been separated from the domain of religious, social and political leaders, and given greater fluidity of dimension (Bass, 1990). Regardless of the application,

according to Bass (1990), two attributes are present and essential for completion of the charismatic relationship:

The leader must be a person of strong convictions, determined, self-confident, and emotionally expressive and his or her followers must want to identify with the leaders as person, whether they are or are not in a crisis. Whether the charismatic leader is self-aggrandizing or pro-social, he or she generates extraordinary performance in the followers (Bass, 1990, p. 220).

Ample research and sources are readily available for study on leadership theories from the Euro-American perspective. Theories on leadership have evolved from the Classical Organization theories of the 1900s to a human relations paradigm (1935-1950), to formulation of organization behavior theories (1950-1975), to the present focus on “human resource management” They have run a course of shifting from “hierarchical power over subordinates,” to today’s present focus on transformational leadership (Kewey, 1997, p. 4). However, leadership research is from an Anglo-American worldview. The thoughts and practices of leadership of Native Americans, from the voices of Native Americans, are rarely found.

Traditional Native American Leadership

There are leaders and there are rulers. We Indians are used to leaders. When our leaders don’t lead, we walk away from them. When they lead well, we stay with them. White people never understood this. Your system makes people Rulers by law, even if they are not leaders. We have had to accept your way, because you made us Indians make constitutions and form governments. But we don’t like it and we don’t think it is right.

How can a calendar tell us how long a person is a leader? That’s crazy. A leader is a leader as long as the people believe in him and as long as he is the best person to lead us. You can only lead as long as the people will follow.

In the past when we needed a warrior we made a warrior our leader. But when the war was over and we needed a healer to lead us, he became our leader. Or maybe we needed a great speaker or a great thinker.

The warrior knew his time had passed and he didn't pretend to be our leader beyond the time he was needed. He was proud to serve his people and he knew when it was time to step aside (Nerburn, 1994, p. 200).

The United States government is conceptually rooted in European political philosophy and tradition. This conception denotes a bureaucratic organization system of legitimate power. Governance is commonly defined as the act of authority or process of power. Before colonization, American Indians did not traditionally "govern" themselves. However, all tribes passed along *their* cultural values and traditions. Hence, *traditional* Native American leadership is the action of transmitting *traditions* and beliefs from one generation to the next (American Indian Policy Center, 2002).

Attempting to fit American Indian leadership paradigms into the Anglo-European model is not possible. In contrast to bureaucratic leaders who can exercise influence through multiple sources of authority, the American Indian leader relied upon his or her influence to lead organizational members toward consensus-based decision-making (Redmond, 1998). The Cherokee, according to Strickland, believed, "Public consensus and harmony rather than confrontation and dispute [were] essential elements of the Cherokee worldview" (Strickland, 1982, p. 11).

According to the American Indian Policy Center, "American Indians lived holistically. They understood themselves to be interconnected with all physical and spiritual forms of life and they did not compartmentalize their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual lives" (AIPC, 2002, p. 1). Strickland uses the metaphor of orange and apple societies to contrast the individualistic and communal ethos foundational to Anglo-European and American Indian societal beliefs and arrangements.

Key societal institutions – economics, politics, law and religion – are segmented and held separate in the orange society [Anglo-European]. The apple society [Native Americans] holds these institutions inseparable; “everything is one great big whole – all in there together . . .” (Strickland, 1997, pp. 2-3).

Four Critical Aspects of Indian Nature: Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual

In traditional Indian cultures, the idea of separation between the political and the spiritual did not exist. American Indian cosmology was centered on the belief that all elements within nature are related and should exist in a state of harmony or balance (O’Brien, 1989). The Native tribes used two methods to make sense of the world: “Empirical observation of the physical world and the continuing but sporadic intrusion of higher powers in their lives, manifested in unusual events and dreams” (Deloria, 2006, p. xxiv). Advice was given by a spiritual leader on how best to live in the world. Today, these individuals are called medicine men or holy ones. “This belief in the orderliness of things, regardless of the apparent chaos, represents the spiritual side of life – how spirit manifests itself in the physical world” (Deloria, 2006, p. xxix).

Culture is the pathway where the values of a people are transmitted. Culture is a storehouse of specific information of rules for behavior, knowledge of a people’s history, their understanding of the world in which they live, and how they need to change and adapt in order to survive. In Native American tribes, this vast body of knowledge was primarily passed down, century by century, in stories, “told by the elders describing their experiences” (Deloria, 2006, p. xxxi).

The intertwining of Indian spirituality with their political values is only one important aspect of Native American life, and it was evidenced in traditional tribal leadership. “All leadership possessed spiritual significance. Strong leaders were those who had a strong spiritual core” (AIPC, 2002, p. 1). Leaders were not considered superior to or above nature (O’Brien, 1989). Smith relays the story of a French fur trader shocked to find the most influential chiefs among the Ojibwe and Ottawa on equal social standing with the poorest of tribal members (Smith, 1979, p. 311).

While Europeans acquired, organized and verified their knowledge through systematic logic, such was and is not the case in tribal societies (Moore, 1998). According to Nabokov, spiritual values “permeated nearly every political, social, and economic activity” in traditional Indian life (Nabokov, 1992, p. 53). Moore adds, “While Native American societies have made significant scientific advances in the fields of astronomy, agronomy, art, and architecture, these advances were consistently couched in religious language, and surrounded by ritual and supernatural beliefs” (Moore, 1998, p. 272).

Focus on Community Rather than the Individual

Traditional Indian leadership was based on the community and not the individual (Steiner, 1968). Power to lead came from the people and flowed from the bottom up; individual performance and ability were the bases for status and position within traditional tribal communities (O’Brien, 1989). Traditionally, community members chose their leaders based upon virtues such as honesty, commitment to serve, and generosity (Deloria, 2003). Individuals viewed as prideful, insensitive to others, or filled

with self-importance, were considered inadequate for positions of leadership (Bopp, 1989). Rather than focusing on the individual leaders, Indian leadership was focused on the entire community (Steiner, 1968). Embodying the concept of public servant, traditional Indian leaders focused on protection of the community, future generations and the environment, with the primary goal of establishing harmony and balance with self, community and the natural world (Steiner, 1968).

Indian leaders did not give orders to the community. The principle of “right to self-determination” was strictly followed. “As a sign of respect, [American Indians] did not [and do not] attempt to impose their beliefs on others” (AIPC, 2002, p. 2).

The Orator

Oratory skills were essential for an Indian leader. Speeches were usually brief and wasted few words; they were delivered without “benefit of notes and came entirely from memory” (Vanderwerth, 1971, p. 7). Oratory skills were used in community council and councils convened between tribes, along with the necessary meetings between Whites and the tribes. The young men attended council meetings so they could watch, listen and study the methods of delivery, and learn how reasoned arguments were presented to the people. Everyone in attendance was accorded the opportunity to speak (Vanderwerth, 1971). Carroll cites Smith and Birdwell (1993) as stating that, during the 18th century, Cherokee “spiritual leaders or orators would recite the [traditional] law once a year through reading from wampum belts. In the beads of these belts were the history and tradition of the people” (Carroll, 2002, p. 2).

The Pace of Native American Life

The American Indian Policy Center describes Native American life as “slow, patient, deliberate and unhurried” (AIPC, 2002, p. 2). Actions and decisions made in haste and urgency were distrusted. It was characteristic of Indian leaders to be patient in their decision-making. A moral reason underlay this slow, methodical behavior. A decision, when voiced, was to give one’s word. This constituted an eternal, binding pledge. Therefore, “When making decisions, Indian leaders carefully considered the welfare of the tribe and future generations and did not make decisions lightly” (AIPC, 2002, p. 2). Deloria explains that the Indian “can dwell for hours on slight nuances that others would completely miss or feel unworthy of their attention” (Deloria, 1988, p. 217).

Highlights of Traditional Native American Leadership Characteristics

1. Spirituality was a core element of American Indian life, and all leadership possessed spiritual significance;
2. Leaders demonstrated generosity and kindness, and honored all living things;
3. Elders cultivated the leadership of future generations;
4. American Indian leaders were humble servants to the community. Individuals did not seek leadership. Leaders emerged from their contributions to the community, and the people recognized and selected those considered most able to lead;
5. No one person was always a leader, and many were leaders at different times;
6. The community could cease to recognize leaders by simply choosing to not follow him or her;
7. American Indian leaders led by example rather than by authority or command;
8. American Indian leaders took their time when making a decision. When they gave their word on a decision, it was a final, binding pledge;
9. When tribal leaders met to deliberate on a matter, they sought understanding and consensus through mutual inquiry. There was no debate;
10. American Indian methods of resolving social conflict were based on the concept of restitution [rather than retribution] that focused on restoring respectful personal and social relations (American Indian Policy Center, 2005, pp. 3-4).

Deloria states, the “basic Indian political pattern has endured despite efforts by the federal government to change it” (Deloria, 1988, p. 205). Deloria’s research indicated that an Indian leader retained his followers so long as he met the goals of his constituents. Regarding Indian leadership, the only difference between today and two hundred years ago is the insertion of the Bureau of Indian Affairs into the daily lives of the Indian tribes. By issuance of rules for Indian leaders, the BIA exercised authority and power over the tribes (the Cherokee included), but their power and authority did not automatically create BIA leaders, BIA leadership or Indian tribal followers. Deloria’s statements apply to the time period of the current study.

Suggested Reasons for the Scarcity of Information on Native American Leadership

Over the past five hundred years, the dominant White society in America has chosen to imagine the Indian has vanished. The two sides of Indians’ past, the murdering savage and the noble savage, are mythologized and embedded in the consciousness of White America. These two sides of the Indian are depicted over and over again, in books, novels and movies, as fading into the glory of the Western sunset. Given the inordinate efforts to destroy the Indian, it would logically follow that the White imagination would settle on the truth that their efforts were successful.

The Euro-American imagined definition of what a *real* Indian is has remained in force for centuries. The image an Indian identity connotes denies Indians a “contemporary identity and existence” (Owens, 2001, p. 127). *Real* Indians only exist in the imagination of White America as the vanished Indian (Owens, 2001). Lacking currency and agency in White America, this researcher suggests that “truth” and “reality”

about the American Indian (including their leaders and leadership characteristics) has been set, as vanished, by the dominant society. From the Euro-American perspective, American Indian tribes and their leaders are merely a surface discourse established from a cultural glance by the dominant European-American culture over several hundred years of colonization (Owens, 2001).

There have been numerous theories and models of leadership developed by European-American researchers in the effort to explain and better understand leadership (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1993; Hanson, 2003; Morgan, 1998; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). In contrast, a recent search by this researcher of Dissertation Abstracts International, from 1977-2007, using “Native American Leadership” as search words, yielded 231 dissertations. From this offering, six dissertations (Begaye, 2003; Munson, 2007; Louie, 1996; Wise-Erickson, 2003; Keway, 1997; Buchanan, 1972) specifically addressed contemporary Native American leadership. Two dissertations were found addressing leadership in the Lakota and Ojibwe tribes from a 19th century perspective. Seventeen dissertations focused on leadership from various educational perspectives. Two studies were found on Canadian and Alaskan tribes. Only Buchanan’s dissertation (1972) focused on Cherokee organization and leadership. Baldwin’s dissertation (1985) contrasts the growth of tribal bureaucracy between the Cherokee and the Otoe-Missouri of Oklahoma. Wahrhaftig’s dissertation (1975) is important for his theories generated regarding Cherokee cultural organization established from fieldwork in the early 1960s and 1970s.

Munson states: “Historically documented viewpoints of Native Americans relating the concept of leadership are extremely limited” (Munson, 2007, p. 3). Louie found, “ Research that addresses Indian leadership issues and tribal problems is critically deficient, and therefore, sorely needed” (Louie, 1996, pp. 8-9). Buchanan found in his historical readings that “histories of the Cherokee usually ended in 1907, when Oklahoma became a state” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 1). As Deloria noted, “Rarely does anyone ask an Indian what he thinks about the modern world” (Deloria, 1988, p. 225).

According to the American Indian Policy Center (2002), legitimate academic information on traditional American Indian leadership is scarce and primarily written from European-American perspectives rather than using the knowledge and voice of the Native American. Scholars interested in Native American leadership are cautioned by the American Indian Policy Center that generalizations should not be made from tribe to tribe due to their cultural dissimilarities. Depending on a tribe’s customs and values, the leadership style will vary (Roupe, 1986). While all tribes consider [and, still consider] themselves “separate, distinct, and sovereign . . . traditional tribal governments shared certain values, ideas of leadership, and styles of decision-making” (O’Brien, 1993, p. 14).

The history of the Cherokee people in the 18th and 19th centuries can be found in many books. The works of King (1981); McLoughlin (1992); Strickland (1982); and Woodward (1988) are often cited by authors and researchers. Information specific to the Cherokee is located in chapters of texts. Examples are Debo, 1991; Foreman, 1989; Hudson, 1975; and Steiner, 1968. The value of this work is not diminished in that the material is primarily of the Cherokee past, not the Cherokee present. These seminal

books, including Mooney (1982) and Starr (1984), hold valuable historical information about the Cherokee. However, their continued use as Cherokee source material simply emphasizes the reality that research, furthering knowledge of the Cherokee Nation, essentially stopped with the statehood of Oklahoma in 1907.

The most recent books found on the Cherokee are Conley (2005), Mankiller and Wallis (1993), Perdue and Green (2007). Perdue and Green's work deals with the Cherokee in the 18th and 19th centuries. Conley begins before Removal and ends with the administration of Wilma Mankiller. Mankiller and Wallis's work is autobiographical, and contains historical data along with current tribal information.

According to Fixico, "As of 1991, 127 tribes lack a written history" (Mihesuah, 1998, p. 96). Available sources on Native Americans deal mainly with history and culture. The body of available work is primarily pre-1960. However, exceptions exist (Foley, 1997). While leadership is typically not specifically addressed, rare discussions on Native American leadership can be found (Deloria, 1988).

Discovering the absence of research on Native American leadership, in general, further frustrates the effort to locate information about leadership of specific tribes (the Cherokee, as an example). Four reasons are identified as possible explanations for the lack of information found about Cherokee leadership, or Native American leadership, in general. First, there was little interest in writing about the tribes. As stated by Alford, "The scholar who now seeks to explore the institutions of any Indian tribe or nation within the area of English occupation must deal with bits and pieces of evidence. The chroniclers of Indian 'affairs' in the English settlements viewed those affairs as

‘troubles’” (Alford, 1982, p. ix). Second, in Cherokee history, there were several periods without leadership (Mankiller, 1993). Third, Indian knowledge is oral. According to Champagne, “There seems relatively little interest in meeting Indians on their own terms and taking the time and energy to understand the cultural perspectives and values by which Indians live” (Champagne, 1997, p. 187). Brown points to a fourth reason. Because of the many dislocations experienced by the Cherokee, families protected the records of sacred medical formulas and incantations by secreting them away in “glass jars or tobacco tins” (Brown, 1977, p. 1). Over time, they were often forgotten. With a paucity of research available on Cherokee leadership, a review of the literature continues its discussion.

The Cherokee

No one knows where the Cherokees originated (Conley, 2005; Starr, 1984). Linguistically, the Cherokee are related to the Iroquois. Three dialects were spoken by the Cherokee: the Eastern dialect (now near distinction), the Middle dialect heard in the center of (the old) Cherokee Nation, and the Western dialect, “spoken in most of the towns of east Tennessee and upper Georgia” (Mooney, 1982, p. 17). The sounds of the Western dialect are soft and musical. At present, it is the Western dialect most often heard in the Cherokee Nation (Mooney, 1982).

The Cherokee are known to be an independent-minded people. They believe in the right of the individual to think and do as each individual, alone, decides. However, time is taken when making decisions; and once a decision is privately made, the Cherokee individual stays with his or her decision. Cherokee people do not force their

views on others. If they disagree with a community member, the tactic of withdrawal is implemented to preserve harmony among the people. The moral character of the Cherokee intertwined with their original form of government. According to Buchanan, “The Cherokee ethos centers on the harmony ethic, with consensus rule and avoidance of open hostility . . . Their socio-political system may be characterized as acephalous, that is, ‘without head,’ since the Cherokees both historically and at present prefer to maintain political authority in the hands of individuals of the corporate group rather than to delegate power to another” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 21). In other words, when discussing Cherokee leadership, it is believed Cherokee ethos and the social features of the Cherokee cannot be excluded from the discourse.

Gearing’s research supports Buchanan, as Gearing created theoretical linkages of Cherokee social structure as a framework for how the Cherokee ordered their roles and identities. Gearing did not intend the “pose” to describe behavior. Rather, depending on the situation, many roles could emerge and were conceptualized as “structural poses.” Fogelson (1963) cites Gearing as defining a structural pose as “the way a simple human society sees itself to be appropriately organized at a particular moment for a particular purpose. The three constants of the Cherokee town were clan kinship, one’s age, and one’s sex (male or female)” (Gearing, 1962, p. 15).

As White encroachment on Cherokee lands persisted during pre-removal, along with continual pressure by the U. S. government, missionaries, and White citizens to “civilize” the Cherokee people, the Cherokee modified their towns and governing system. Their adaptations to features of the dominant society were selective, however. There

should be no assumption made that the Cherokee “totally abandoned their own system of organization and leadership” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 24).

The Towns – Early 17th Century Political Organization

The three Cherokee dialects were divided into three regions: Upper Towns, the Middle Towns, and the Lower Towns (Conley, 2005). Each town was autonomous, with its own government. It is believed there were fifty to 100 towns at “any given time . . . with 150 to 600 people” (Coates, 2006, personal notes). According to Conley (2005), “We don’t know exactly how these town governments were structured and how they worked” (p. 6). The three features discussed earlier were primary characteristics of each Cherokee town: the ethics of harmony, political authority vested in the group rather than an individual, and consensus rule by the “red” and “white” organizations of each town. Buchanan (1972) cites Thomas (1958): “There was no coercive power in the hands of any Cherokee ‘town leader’” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 25). Rather than coercive power in one individual leader or a small group, Buchanan states, “Political authority was vested in the group at large. In the small, interdependent, kin community, the prescribed roles of individuals and group expectations serve as enforcers of the norms” (p. 25).

Gearing (1962) believed a town’s “red” organization (war) and “white” organization (civic-religious) were examples of structural poses. Fogelson cites Gearing’s hypotheses of social structures (Cherokee “red” and “white” organizations, as examples) as “shifting configurations of patterned role relationships adjusted to specific tasks occurring through the yearly cycle. Thus, for a given society, there may not be one social structure but several” (Fogelson, 1963, p. 726). Responsibilities of the “white”

organization were directing council meetings and religious ceremonies, and arbitrating disputes. According to Persico, although every member of the town was a member of the council, three groups of elder men dominated the meetings: “1) The town priest-chief and his assistants; 2) the seven elders representing each of the seven clans; and 3) the remainder of the highly respected senior men, designated ‘beloved men’” (Persico, 1981, p. 93). The membership of the “red” organization represented the younger Cherokee men. They were responsible for war, trade and diplomatic efforts (Gearing, 1962).

It appears that, during the 17th and early 18th centuries, the towns were not politically linked. The towns were, however, unified by a common bond of culture, clan system, history, trade alliances, ceremonial system, war, peace, and language (Carroll, 2002).

The guiding principal of creating and maintaining harmony in Cherokee politics was reflected in the town council meetings. “Harmony and the avoidance of open conflict were highly valued in interpersonal relationships” (Persico, 1981, p. 94). During council meetings, if a member was not able to avoid conflict, he/she was expected to withdraw either emotionally or physically. Self-interests were sublimated in the interest of unanimity (Persico, 1981). This Cherokee behavior conforms with Spindler’s work on American Indian personality types. Although Spindler’s model is not considered uniform to all tribes, commonalities do exist. A core feature found was “non-demonstrative emotionality and reserve accompanied by a high degree of control over interpersonal aggression within the in-group” (Spindler, 1957, p. 148).

It is believed there was not one Principal Chief representing the Cherokee towns. Several men held the title of chieftain, but this position could only persuade by strength of personality or oratory skills (Perdue, 1981). Buchanan's research indicates, "An individual, on occasion, would have great influence over the council; however, his only power was through the force of his character, his oratorical ability, and his status as an elder. Even the most powerful of the Cherokee 'Chiefs' did not have formal punitive power to force obedience to their decrees" (Buchanan, 1972, p. 27). Political power in the 17th and 18th century Cherokee towns was vested in the community, not the individual. As White contact intensified, the Cherokee political organization, as structured, would be pressured to change, as the Europeans did not "see" separate Cherokee towns and leaders. Not being able to distinguish between the towns, Whites held that all Cherokee towns were to blame for the misdeeds of a single community. As a result of this dilemma, the Cherokees recognized the need to consider a move toward a centralized government. The English solved their problem by appointing, in 1730, an "emperor" of the Cherokees (Buchanan, 1972; Coates, 2006; Fogelson, 1963).

Harmony was disturbed by this act of the English. The towns began to vie for English favoritism for their town and their particular leader (Gearing, 1962). The appointment of the "emperor" changed the "acephalous town system" by creating imbalance in the loose alliance of autonomous towns (Buchanan, 1972, p. 26). The "one-chief" representation disrupted the "red" political organization that previously had provided a system for young Cherokee men to release their youthful energies. The "red" organization also functioned as a system to protect the towns, along with serving as a

“way-station” where the young men matured and then joined the peaceful “white” organization as age permitted. According to Buchanan, “The three major characteristics of Cherokee politics [the town system, the red/white organizations of the autonomous towns, the harmony ethos] underwent severe stress from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 29).

One purpose of the Cherokee town system was the selection of “red” and “white” leaders. Cherokee individuals were selected by the villagers, and raised with these leadership positions in mind. Two sets of leaders were needed for two different roles. The religious or “white” leader was “especially equipped to sense minute jealousies and to nurture trust” (Gearing, 1962, p. 110). Leaders were chosen on the basis of their demonstrated competence, not by birthrights. According to Gearing, any Cherokee could desire to be a leader, but few became leaders. “Leaders seem to have been selected on the basis of age and demonstrated competence. ‘Red’ leadership fell to young men and ‘white’ leadership fell to old men, so a man could have become prominent in both systems at different points in his life” (Gearing, 1962, p. 108).

The three features of the Cherokee socio-political system were thrown out of balance by English intrusion into their governing system, and conflict among the Cherokees appeared. Open conflict is in opposition to the Cherokee ethos. As a result, conjuring/magic and gossip became prominent and visible, and sanctions were used by Cherokees against other Cherokees to vent their anger and frustration (Gearing, 1962). Gearing admits to using his learned imagination in theorizing about critical changes in the Cherokee political system due to the “thinness” of data. Gearing suggests that

disruption to the Cherokee “red” and “white” organizations, by the establishment of a single Chief, introduced coercion as a governing tool into the Cherokee system by the necessity of seating both “red” and “white” organizations together in council.

Additionally, Gearing argues, it is plausible “the two systems [‘red’ and ‘white’] became Cherokee political parties” (Gearing, 1962, p. 111).

Mixing Blood

White encroachment continued. Cherokee land holdings, always in jeopardy from Whites, lessened. Disease and warfare were twin enemies to the Cherokee population. The proselytizing of Christian missionaries weakened traditional law and Cherokee culture (Carroll, 2002). Further diluting the Cherokee traditional life-ways was a weakening of the clan system. According to Mankiller (1993), the political influence of Cherokee women would start to diminish due to intermarriage with Whites. The power of Cherokee women would be reduced by White husbands not respecting the rights of their Cherokee wives, their property, children, or inheritance (Carroll, 2002). The intermarriages resulted in a growing problem of mixed-blood children. According to Sturm, the continuity of the tribe was not threatened, however, as “the matrilineal clan system ensured that the child of a Cherokee woman and European man would be identified as Cherokee” (Sturm, 2002, p. 31). Mankiller believes the intermarrying of Cherokee women and White men was a key reason for Cherokee society becoming out of balance during this time in Cherokee history. Mankiller points out that, “Although, the mixed-blood children were still considered Cherokee, eventually, they [the mixed-bloods] would ascend to the ruling class in Cherokee society, replacing the old form of government.

The purebloods and traditionalists tried to hold on, aware that the balance of our world was going away” (Mankiller, 1993, p. 26).

Originally, the Cherokees extended an invitation to the missionaries into their territory with the stipulation they “bring schools as well as the Gospel” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 30). During the early 19th century, Sequoyah invented the Cherokee syllabary; a newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, began publication in both Cherokee and English; a Cherokee national government was formed; a constitution was written; the Capitol, New Echota, was established; and a Principal Chief, John Ross, was elected by the people.

The Co-Existence of Factionalism and Advancement

Calling “home” (the Old Nation) the states of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia, it is thought that the Cherokee numbered between 20,000 to 25,000 people. During Mooney’s research on the Cherokee, and his subsequent annual report to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1891, he expressed surprise that almost nothing had been written about their history or ethnology. As Mooney stated: “[H]aving their own national government . . . the Cherokee are probably the largest and most important tribe in the United States” (Mooney, 1982, p. 11). Mooney surmised, since Cherokee society lived by a code of laws; maintained a national school system, a press and newspaper; and adopted a constitution, perhaps the Cherokee culture was viewed as sufficiently advanced, which dampened the interest of any ethnologic study (Mooney, 1982; Wahrhaftig, 1975). According to Baldwin, the tremendous successes of the Cherokee “in adapting white economics and educational institutions to their life styles [to which Mooney alludes] is the source of the Cherokees’

resistance to removal” (Baldwin, 1985, p. 62). Cherokee achievements did not slow White lust for Cherokee land. “It was the achievements, not the failures, of the Cherokees that had continued to haunt white Americans all these years” (McLoughlin, 1992, p. 278).

The growing presence of the Europeans created an unrelenting external influence on the Cherokee value system. Commercialization began to flourish in opposition to the Cherokee “traditional value system based on religion” (Carroll, 2002, p. 3). As traditional Cherokee laws begin to change, the Cherokee were forced to find new strategies to accommodate the cultural gulf between their traditional beliefs and practices and the demands of a White government. Outwardly, the Cherokee political organization brought itself under the leadership of a Principal Chief, adopted a constitution, and created a system of government modeled after the United States government (Carroll, 2002; Woodward, 1988). According to Strickland, it would be a mistake to conclude that, with the adoption of new written Cherokee laws in 1827, traditional Cherokee law and governance disappeared. Strickland cautions: “When the priestly religious complex ceased to function as a tribal governing force, lesser ‘medicine men,’ with purported powers to bring divine assistance and to heal, assumed many of the new social and legal roles in the life of the individual Cherokee” (Strickland, 1982, p. 183).

Although the outward appearance of the political organization of the Cherokee changed greatly, the internal culture of the Cherokee “was still based on long-established patterns that were familiar to the average Cherokee” (Carroll, 2002, p. 3). The outward appearance of the tribe was White, but an internal feature of the tribe kept a traditional

aspect. At the time of his research, Buchanan states: “No study, taking into account local organizations and leadership, has, however, been made of the ‘full-blood’ element during the early eighteenth century” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 30). Buchanan postulates that the Cherokee socio-political structure changed by keeping traditional forms of government at the local level while selectively adopting European forms of government at the new Cherokee national level (Buchanan, 1972).

The growth of a Cherokee mixed-blood population was considered a positive development by the American government. The mixing of blood, it was believed, would eventually lead to the disappearance of the “real Indian” (McLoughlin, 1992, p. 70). The practice of inter-marriage between Cherokee women and White men was encouraged. The increasing numbers of mixed-blood children created not only the classic older generation versus the ideas of a younger generation, but an added element of confusion with a younger mixed-blood generation caught between the value systems of two worlds. According to McLoughlin, “The priests and medicine men tried to preserve the orderly relations between man and nature, but the old ways and the old belief system did not correspond with their new circumstances” (McLoughlin, 1992, p. 33). One result of the gap in this generational ideology was the appearance of factionalism in the tribe. According to Conley, “Such factionalism will continue to grow throughout the remainder of Cherokee history” (Conley, 2005, p. 42). Fogelson suggests Cherokee factionalism and feuds, “which have been endemic and transgenerational features of Cherokee history,” are rooted in perceived transgressions of the “overriding Cherokee commitment to a sense of justice in human relations” (Fogelson, 1975, p. 126).

Changes in the Course of Cherokee Leadership

The lives of four Cherokee leaders came together to change the course of Cherokee history. The state of Georgia, fearful that the successes of the Cherokee would result in their demand for U.S. citizenship, intensified their political efforts to gain access to Cherokee lands. Aware of both Georgia's continued calls to Washington for their removal and the probable election of Andrew Jackson (1828), the Cherokees knew they would need to fill the vacancy of Principal Chief with an executive of superior leadership skills (Woodward, 1988). John Ross, a 1/8 mixed-blood Cherokee, well educated, articulate, wealthy, seasoned by various political apprenticeships, and sharing the norms and values of the full-bloods, was elected by the Cherokees to be the new Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Although hampered by a Cherokee leader's lack of coercive power, Ross was to be the most influential political figure in the Nation from the time of his first election, in 1828, through 1860. Ross was Principal Chief from pre-Removal through the Civil War, and appeared to have the support of the majority of the Cherokee people. According to Woodward, although raised White, he was "Cherokee to the core" (Woodward, 1988, p. 157).

Principal Chief John Ross (1828) and President Andrew Jackson (1829) were elected to their terms of office almost simultaneously (Conley, 2005). During John Ross's first year in office, Andrew Jackson addressed Congress, delivering the message of his Indian policy to move the Cherokee to lands west of the Mississippi River. Jackson's successful Indian Removal Bill, pushed through Congress in 1830, resulted in removal treaties signed by the Choctaws (1830), the Chickasaws (1832), the Creeks

(1832), and the Seminoles (1832). According to Woodward, the Cherokees, “relying on their white friends and their own educated leaders – held on to their prized independence” (Woodward, 1988, p. 161). Cherokee community leaders, at the urging of John Ross, began to preach to the people “the doctrine of unity and the dishonor of betrayal” (Woodward, 1988, p. 158).

According to Anderson, “a minority party (1833) developed within the Cherokee Nation, led by Major Ridge, a hero of the War of 1812; his New England-educated son, John Ridge, and [the equally well educated] Elias Boudinot” (Anderson, 1991, p. xii). This group would come to be known as the Treaty Party. The Anti-Removal party, representing the majority of the Cherokees (16,000), was led by John Ross (Anderson, 1991, p. xii).

The success of the [leaders of the] Treaty party in effecting the final removal of the Cherokee Nation by a fraudulent treaty signed at New Echota [Georgia] on December 29, 1835, by less than one hundred Cherokees stemmed from a secret alliance made by the Treaty party with the Jackson-Georgia removal machine sometime between 1832-1835. That this alliance necessitated the betrayal of the Nation by leaders of the Treaty party is a matter of record (Woodward, 1988, p. 174-75).

The actions of Major Ridge, John Ridge and Elias Boudinot were considered treason by the Ross Party (anti-removal party, also known as the National Party). Selling Cherokee lands violated the sacred laws of the Cherokee Nation, and was punishable by death.

It is interesting at this point to consider Gearing’s theory of the “red” and “white” organizations eventually ending in the establishment of two divided political parties. The Treaty Party might be considered led by a mixed-blood faction and equivalent to the

“red” organization. John Ross’s anti-removal party was populated by a majority of full-bloods and was representative of the “white” or priestly element of the “white” organization.

According to Coates, John Ross was considered naïve by the Treaty Party. Elias Boudinot did not believe John Ross had the experience to deal with the outside world or the capability of dealing with Washington. “If we can see, isn’t it our responsibility to save the majority?” [said Elias Boudinot] (Coates, 2006, personal notes). Coates suggests there may have been no villain in the story – neither Ross, nor the Ridges. “Ross knew the hearts of the people. But, the Ridges saw the future of the Nation” (Coates, 2006, personal notes).

Theda Perdue posits a different theory. As the Cherokee political organization became more centralized, the Chiefs gained economic power and became wealthy. Mixed-blood children were born to Cherokee mothers and monied White traders. The two groups, the wealthy Chiefs and the newly formed mixed families, eventually came to comprise an elite class that assumed the major roles in the political and economic spheres of Cherokee society (Perdue, 1991, p. 58). John Ross was considered a member of the elite class. According to Perdue, “The ‘common Indians’ did not object [to the elite increasing their wealth] so long as they were not exploited directly” (Perdue, 1991, p. 66).

The Ridges and Elias Boudinot belonged to a “rising middle class” of Cherokees, and were envious of the aristocratic elite of which John Ross was a member. Perdue suggests the rising middle class “saw in the removal issue an opportunity to usurp

political authority and to reap rewards and concessions from the United States” (Perdue, 1991, p. 66). Whatever the motives of the various leaders involved in removal, a break occurred in the Cherokee Nation. Factionalism was born.

John Ross made every effort possible to prepare the people of the Cherokee Nation for Removal. According to Woodward, one action of critical importance was that John Ross “superintended the boxing and packing of the Cherokee Nation’s sacred records, which dated back to 1808, the date of the Cherokee’s first written laws. Among these documents was the correspondence between the Cherokee Nation and all the Presidents of the United States, from Washington to Van Buren” (Woodward, 1988, p. 214). The tragedy of Removal would remain in the memories of the surviving Cherokees, their descendants, and their descendants.

After Removal – The Years of 1839-1848

According to Strickland and Strickland, after Removal, the Cherokee Tribe “passed through at least six stages, each of which represented a new set of challenges” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 113). There was severe acrimony between the Ross Party on their arrival in Indian Territory and the already established “Old Settlers” and the Treaty Party, the latter groups having made their way to their new “home” earlier. Civil war erupted among the splintered groups and lasted for more than a decade (Strickland & Strickland, 1991). Major Ridge, his son, John Ridge, and Elias Boudinot, were assassinated for their treacherous act of selling Cherokee land. John Ross was opposed to the murders. As Cherokee leaders had no power of coercion, Ross did not have the power to ward off the inevitable assassinations. According to Strickland,

“Cherokee respect for civil rights and government by consensus had not survived the Trail of Tears” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 113).

Because of a numerical majority, John Ross was able to re-create the government, just built in the “Old Nation,” before removal. Ross was opposed by an alliance of the Old Settlers and the Treaty Party. Discord continued.

According to Wahrhaftig, by 1840, the Cherokee National Council was meeting in the new capitol in Tahlequah, and a national system of education was in operation by 1841. “How did such institutions come into being? Although Cherokee developments are described at length in a number of readily available histories of the tribe, this basic question of social process remains unanswered” (Wahrhaftig, 1975, p. 133). Wahrhaftig (1975) argues against Morris Wardell’s (1938) and Grace Woodward’s (1988) theory of giving credit to the rapid development of the Cherokees to the elite mixed-bloods. Nor does Wahrhaftig assign Cherokee progress to the “progressive element” (Bureau of Indian Affairs, state and federal bureaucracies, local Tahlequah businessmen, or the Cherokee Tribal government). Wahrhaftig instead suggests, “The autonomous Cherokee Nation, which lasted until it was dissolved by whites in 1907, may have been built by men who received credit from whites for accomplishments demanded of them by their traditional elders” (Wahrhaftig, 1975, p. 134).

Renaissance 1849-1860

Popularly referred to as the “Golden Age of the Cherokee,” for a ten-year period, the Cherokee government founded female and male seminaries (secondary schools), and re-instituted a tribal newspaper (the *Cherokee Advocate*). According to Strickland and

Strickland, the “economic, cultural, and social institutions that had begun to flower before removal now came to fruition” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 114).

Confidence returned to the tribe. A traditional element of Cherokee leadership was evidenced once again by the secret Keetoowah Society formed in 1859. According to Starr, “the purpose of [the Keetoowah Society] is protecting national and community interests and for the fuller development of the nobler qualities of individualism. It has always been especially active in up-building the religious and patriotic instincts of its members” (Starr, 1984, p. 143). The medicine doctors (spiritual leaders) remained powerful (Strickland & Strickland, 1991). Every Cherokee, regardless of economic position, benefited during this time period.

The Civil War – The Years of 1861-1871

Cherokee loyalties divided once again, and factionalism returned to disrupt the tribe during the Civil War. John Ross and a majority of Cherokees favored neutrality rather than siding with either the North or the South (Buchanan, 1972). Those Cherokees favoring involvement in the war on the side of the South, coupled with Southern promises of monetary reward and protection, led to Cherokees fighting for the Confederacy and the Union. Politically neutral Cherokees fled their homes. “The Cherokee nation became a site of massive guerrilla warfare” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 116). Once again, homes, land and food sources were destroyed. The Cherokee Nation was pulverized by both the North and the South during the Civil War.

With loyalties divided between the Tribe’s parties, lack of unity among the Cherokee leaders would weaken their negotiating positions and again bring tremendous

harm to the Cherokee people. The United States took the opportunity to punish the Cherokees in total for those fighting for the Confederacy by stripping “the nation of a vast portion of the fee-title property acquired at the time of removal” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 116-117). John Ross was deposed as Principal Chief by a federal commissioner. The final treaty between the Cherokees and the United States (Ft. Smith, 1866) would be extremely punitive. Railroads were given rights-of-way across the Nation. U. S. courts were established inside the sovereign Cherokee Nation. The Cherokees were forced to admit members of other tribes. The treaty, itself, providentially “set the stage” for the next tribal crisis (Buchanan, 1972; Strickland & Strickland, 1991; Deloria & Lytle, 1984).

Allotment – The Years of 1872-1906

The Cherokees rebuilt their Nation after the Civil War. Schools and commerce flourished once again. The Cherokee government, patterned after that of the United States, functioned well enough for the Cherokees, but did not have the strength to fend off the unremitting demands of the surrounding Whites for vacant, “wasted” land. The Cherokee Nation, at great expense, was continually sending delegations to Washington, to argue their cause. The old political divisions began to dissolve in the face of the danger to Cherokee land. New alliances were formed. The lobbyists and negotiators were no match for the heightened vocalization of White voters for “more land,” and the forward march of technology. Cherokee land held in common was incomprehensible to the White entrepreneur whose eyes were on exploitation of fertile land, timber and minerals. The land was a wedge between two different worldviews. “And, once again,

the Cherokee had foolishly taken the white at his word that what had happened in Georgia would never happen again” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 121).

In 1887, the Dawes Act (also known as the General Allotment Act) was enacted to break up tribal land into small parcels and transfer the “lots” to individual, enrolled tribal members. The tool used was the establishment of the Dawes Commission (1893). Congress passed the Curtis Act (1898) to speed the process. The Cherokee courts were terminated and the Cherokee Nation stripped of its powers. The Cherokee government was dissolved. Oklahoma became a state in 1907 (Carroll, 2002).

Allotment of Cherokee lands and statehood did not happen without strong opposition by the Cherokee full-blood leadership. The full-blood resistance movement illustrated “that traditional patterns long-supposed dead still existed” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 33). According to Buchanan:

The “mixed-bloods” did not have the commitment to a separate Cherokee government that the “full-bloods” did and favored accommodation with the dominant society rather than fighting for continued pluralism. The “full-blood” element, clinging to the legality of treaties that had granted their land in perpetuity, adopted an attitude of non-acceptance of the destruction of their Nation. Lacking control of the machinery of their own government, the “full-bloods” relied upon a traditional organization that had been organized in 1859 to oppose slavery and to protect their Cherokee traditions. This organization, called the Keetoowah Society, and the numerous organizations it spawned, attempted both before and after Oklahoma statehood to persuade or force the United States government to honor its treaties (Buchanan, 1972, p. 33-34).

Failing to halt the allotment of their land and the statehood of Oklahoma, the full-bloods employed a traditional sanction of withdrawal. As the minority dissenters, the full-bloods pulled back into the remoteness of the hills outside of Tahlequah. Their

action exemplified the old Cherokee method of maintaining harmony and consensus in both groups: the full-bloods and the mixed-bloods.

Struggling to Remain Intact and Preserve Tribal Identity – The Years of 1907-1946

From the historical mark of the Revolutionary War, the growing power of the United States and the “impact of colonization’s destructive influence” would fall hard on all Indian tribal governments, including the Cherokees (Porter, 1999, p. 1). Besides their military defeats, continual land losses and forced education, the three primary attributes of the Native American identity – kinship, land and community – were decoupled (Thornton, 1998; Porter, 1999). According to Porter, “By the beginning of the twentieth century, the traditional governing process within most of our nations had been virtually destroyed. In less than 100 years, our nations were transformed from vibrant societies able to address the needs of our people to remnants of their former selves heavily dependent upon the federal, and sometimes state, governments and their Indian affairs bureaucracies” (Porter, 1999, p. 2).

After Oklahoma statehood, the Cherokees were in a state of dissaray. The President of the United States appointed a Chief for the Cherokee people, whose primary responsibility was signing deeds for disposition of Cherokee land (Buchanan, 1972; Conley, 2005). The full-blood element of the Cherokee people formed several groups. Each elected their own Chief, attesting to their non-acceptance of the federal government to determine their leaders. As examples, Frank Boudinot was elected by one faction, Levi Gritts by another. However, neither Chief was ever formally recognized by the federal government. William C. Rogers was the first of seven Chiefs appointed by the

federal government. These men would come to be known as “Chief-for-the-day” (Conley, 2005, pp. 198-203). Their only responsibility was signing deeds disposing of Cherokee land holdings.

Important Events: Federal Legislation and the Election of a Chief

In 1928, The Meriam Report (1928) was released, declaring federal Indian policy a total disaster. John Collier was Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Collier’s efforts were critical in the passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act. Two years later (1936), the Oklahoma Indian General Welfare Act (OIGWA) passed, “allowing any ten Indians in the state to form a corporation and seek a federal charter” (Conley, 2005, p. 204). Thousands of Cherokees left Oklahoma during the Great Depression, in search of employment. Half of their population gone, the Cherokee National Council met in 1938, and elected mixed-blood Bartley Milam as their Principal Chief. Still operating under the political “Chief-for-a-day” system, F.D.R. appointed Bartley Milam as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Milam’s appointment by the President, and his uncontested election by the Cherokee people, marked a significant (albeit very small) victory turning point in the direction of returning to self-government for the Cherokee Nation (Conley, 2005, p. 205).

The Indian Reorganization Act (1934)

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was created to “end the destructive legacy of the General Allotment Act, and to provide a mechanism for the revitalization of tribal government” (Porter, 1997, p. 83). On the positive side, the federal government thought,

by providing a model for a written form of government, the tribes could reorganize, conduct economic activity, and partially eliminate the administrative grasp of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. An important negative consequence of the model was transferring power into the tribal hands of a few, where previously traditional governance was spread among the entire community. Although Chiefs were leaders, they only had the power to persuade, not coerce (Porter, 1997). According to Porter, the Indian Reorganization Act resulted in the formation of three different types of governments among the “560 groups of indigenous people officially recognized by the United States as possessing sovereign authority and with which it maintains a government-to-government relationship . . . Traditional Governments, Autonomous Constitutional Governments, and Dependent Constitutional or Corporate Government” (Porter 1997, pp. 74-76). Only the Autonomous Constitutional Government will be discussed, as this is the form of government theorized by Porter to have evolved in the Cherokee Nation (Porter, 1997; Deloria & Lytle, 1984).

An Autonomous Constitutional Government (ACG) is characterized by Porter and Deloria as having evolved slowly and deliberately in order to meet the challenges of the times. The traditional leaders and their traditional governing principles have become secondary compared to the importance of the written constitution. However, the character of the ACG is mixed, reflecting elements from both the traditional, “as well as elements adopted from the American system” (Porter, 1997, p. 75). Strickland contends the evolution of the Cherokee government was based on “existing social institutions”

and provided a firm foundation for their later, more complex, constitutional government. This is a “tribute to the wisdom of tribal leadership” (Strickland, 1982, p. 72).

World War II

During the four decades under discussion, the condition of the Cherokee people was dire. There was a picture of destitution and poverty throughout the full-blood segment of the Cherokee Nation. The election of Principal Chief Bartley Milam brought hope to the people, as Milam was a skilled politician with the welfare of the Cherokee people in his sights. Chief W. W. Keeler succeeded Milam. Keeler would continue the work of seeking solutions to the vast problems of the Cherokee people. World War II brought a change, as “young tribal members and older Indian leaders were again drawn into the service of the nation” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 127). The war brought Cherokees into contact with Indians of other tribes and U. S. citizens from across the country, and the GI bill provided for educational opportunities.

1946 to the Administration of Ross Swimmer

Cherokee scholars often refer to this section of time as “renaissance” or “renewal” (Conley, 2005; Strickland & Strickland, 1991). The Indian Claims Act (1946) provided the legal mechanism for the Cherokees to litigate historic claims against the federal government. Having “organized” under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act (1936), the Cherokee Nation was in need of legal representation for upcoming lawsuits. Two critical grievances were brought before the Indian Claims Commission by legal counsel Earl Boyd Pierce. In 1893, the Cherokee had been forced to forfeit, against their will, land to provide room for one of the famous Oklahoma land runs. Monies were awarded by the

Claims Commission to the Principal Chief, for allocation to members of the Dawes Commission Rolls. The “start-up” monies from the unallocated funds would eventually be used to fund the revitalization of the Cherokee Nation. This became known as the Cherokee Outlet case (Strickland & Strickland, 1991).

The Riverbed case became another matter. Under the guidance of Cherokee attorneys Earl Boyd Pierce and Andrew C. Wilcoxon, the claim against the “State of Oklahoma, sixteen oil companies, [and] two sand and gravel companies” was heard by the Supreme Court (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 129). While the Court ruled in favor of the Cherokee Nation, only the first three litigants have paid the Cherokee Nation for the illegal use of Cherokee resources. Ultimately, the United States government was added to the suit for their illegal actions of sale of sand and gravel in a portion of the Arkansas River bed belonging to the Cherokee Nation.

Cherokee Research and the Variance of Perspective

One is struck by the perception of the condition of the Cherokee Nation found in the literature available on this time period in Cherokee history. The few researchers of the Cherokee during the 1960s are all viewing the same landscape. Their analytical lenses, however, yield varying perspectives. Depending on which lens is being used, the story varies along a spectrum from a measure of small progress to enduring hope.

To illustrate the point, Buchanan describes continued factionalism between the nascent Cherokee government and community groups. When W. W. Keeler asked the President of the United States to not reappoint him as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Keeler’s appeal was overruled by the BIA and local state politicians, and he was

reappointed by the President. Simultaneously, a small group of Cherokees elected their own Chief. According to Buchanan, “Although this ‘Chief’ [the community elected Chief] did not have a wide following . . . [he] was, at least, someone they [the full-bloods] knew well and trusted” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 45). Buchanan appeared to view the Cherokee political structure in 1972 as not radically different from his observations at the start of his Cherokee research. Some progress had been made, however, “in that the Chief [Keeler] is now elected by popular vote and the executive committee is augmented by a group of elected community representatives” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 45).

Based on interviews with W. W. Keeler, Conley cites Milligan (1977): “Much to his surprise the full-bloods of the Cherokee Nation petitioned the Department of the Interior to keep Keeler as chief. He agreed, promising to stay until the Cherokees attained the right to vote for their leader” (Conley, 2005, p. 214). According to Strickland and Strickland, Keeler provided the leadership for the Cherokee Nation from the 1940s to the 1970s. Alongside the formidable responsibility of being Principal Chief, Keeler was President of Phillips Petroleum Company. He was known nationally, and knew how to use and manipulate power to the benefit of the Cherokee Nation. Keeler was criticized for not understanding the needs of the full-blood Cherokees, and “hostility and agitation marked his final years” (Strickland & Strickland, 1991, p. 130). Due to the magnitude of Keeler’s efforts and leadership, the Cherokee Nation began its journey toward the hope of self-governing and rebuilding a cohesive vitality.

Wahrhaftig’s fieldwork in the Cherokee Nation during the 1960s discovered severe conditions of poverty and labor exploitation; and continued pressure to abandon

their language, culture and traditions. However, according to Wahrhaftig, “What is less easily seen is the frequency with which Cherokees attempted to construct new and entirely autonomous social and economic institutions within their settlements” (Wahrhaftig, 1977, p. 226).

The events occurring during the sixth time period did not change before the lenses of the researchers. Only the perspective is different. One analyst (Buchanan) struck a tone of disheartenment by the slowness of perceived Cherokee progress; whereas the Cherokee people, themselves, were filled with the joy of hope. To again quote Strickland, “The struggle of the Cherokees has been long and mighty. The Cherokees are indeed a remarkable people, having survived in the face of overwhelming odds” (Strickland, 1982, p. 3).

Summary

Most leadership theories have been produced by Western scholars. Voices from other worldviews are seldom found in a search of the literature. The result is a study of leadership from an Anglo-European-American perspective. Depth and richness of a crucial topic have been sacrificed for the tradition of discounting other ways of knowing. The limited amount of research on leadership from varying perspectives represents a gap of knowledge. By not paying attention to traditional Native American leadership, we now have a glaring absence of leadership information, and this deficiency deserves notice.

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership practices used by one modern Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Ross O. Swimmer. The objective of the

study is to examine Swimmer's leadership characteristics, and to compare those with the existing Anglo-Euro-American theories for determination of sameness, opposition or blending. Whether a particular case of American Indian leadership follows the worldview of a traditional perspective, or blends traditional with Anglo-American theories of leadership, or has completely modernized to pattern itself after a selected Anglo-American leadership theory, the voice of the American Indian leaders needs to be heard and included in the academic body of work on leadership. The voices of the interview participants heard here, gathered through interviews during the course of this study, provide answers to the three questions of this study, but also serve as a vocal instrument for the typically unheard voice of the Cherokee.

To understand the Cherokee Nation, a background in their unique history is necessary. Indian history is long, and complicated. In the case of the Cherokee, the researcher chose to present their history beginning with the division of their removal from the eastern portion of the United States, and ending when Cherokees obtained fee-simple land in Oklahoma. The historical overview given in the literature review is broad, but not comprehensive.

The literature provides sufficient documentation of the Cherokee, their government, and their leaders before Removal. The Cherokee story and their journey of survival through the destruction of their government, many times over, thins in data once Removal is completed. The amount of research continues to lessen as Oklahoma reaches statehood. This researcher was unable to find any studies on the leadership characteristics of one modern Principal Chief, Ross O. Swimmer.

As Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation during 1975-1985, Ross Swimmer played a key role in continuing the foundational work of W. W. Keeler toward the successful revitalization of the Cherokee Nation. The researcher believes the knowledge of Principal Chief Ross Swimmer will be not only an important addition to the existing leadership literature, but also necessary to fill the gap of missing research on Cherokee leadership.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

In my historical readings, I had noted a curiosity; histories of the Cherokee usually ended in 1907, when Oklahoma became a state. Although the myth of assimilation of the Cherokees after statehood was strongly in the historical literature, I discovered a countervailing trend in contemporary sociological and anthropological research. The Cherokees had not, in fact, disappeared after statehood, but continued to comprise a recognizable society – one that currently numbered 10,000 persons (Buchanan, 1972, p. 1-2).

Buchanan's thirty-year-old statement appears to be consistent with the researcher's finding that the research literature contains few scholarly texts or articles that examine the Cherokee in modern times. Moreover, research on Cherokee leadership in general, or on a specific Chief, is almost non-existent. Whether this condition is due to lack of scholarly interest or lack of cooperation on the part of the Cherokee administration or individual Cherokee participation in research endeavors is unknown at this time.

Chapter III discusses the study design and procedures implemented to achieve an initial understanding of Ross O. Swimmer's leadership characteristics, from his reality, during a certain point in time, and in a particular context. This study attempts to add to the body of leadership knowledge by mining minds and memories, and searching for the meaning of leadership from a modern Cherokee perspective.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the leadership characteristics of one Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Ross O. Swimmer, during his administration. Prior to the administration of Swimmer, the federal government had demolished the institutions of the recognized Cherokee Nation government system, decimated its people, and disempowered its formal leadership during three separate time periods. These acts of destruction to the Cherokee Tribe occurred from forced Cherokee Removal (1838) to the Allotment of Cherokee land and Oklahoma statehood (1907). The federal policy of allotment instantaneously impoverished the Cherokee. “Torn from their age-old mooring for which they had not yet found a substitute, people became disoriented” (Hook, 2007, p. 94). Taken from the Cherokee were age-old traditions that gave meaning to their lives, which were (it is assumed) temporarily replaced with “a rapidly changing environment that they neither had made nor comprehended” (Hook, 2007. p. 94). For almost seventy years, from approximately 1900-1970, the Cherokee Nation, under formal leadership, did not exist (O’Brien, 1989; Debo, 1991).

In 1970, after an absence of visible leadership for seventy years, federal Indian policy changed once again; and the members of the Cherokee Nation were given the right to reorganize and elect their own Principal Chief. Almost a century-and-a-half of apparent leadership confusion and instability became the norm for the Cherokee Nation. However, the Cherokee Nation did survive under a cloak of intentional invisibility (Wahrhaftig, 2007).

Little is known of the Cherokee Nation during the seventy-year period prior to the free election by the people of Ross O. Swimmer. During this history of relative silence, subtle adjustments were made to Cherokee traditional leadership practices to accommodate the individualistic, capitalistic ways of the Whites. The Cherokee appeared to have a natural genius for politics. According to Debo, “Trained through countless generations in the proud democracy of primitive councils, they found their borrowed Anglo-American institutions in perfect harmony with their native development” (Debo, 1991, p. 9).

Whether a particular case study of American Indian leadership follows the worldview of a traditional perspective, or blends traditional with Anglo-American theories of leadership, or has completely modernized to pattern itself after a selected Anglo-American leadership theory, the voice of the American Indian leader needs to be heard and included in the academic body of work on leadership. It was intended for the interviews gathered through the course of this study to not only demonstrate and be additive in the arrangement of data serving to address the three questions of this study, but to also be a vocal instrument for the typically unheard voice of the Cherokee.

The Research Questions

The case study examined the nature of modern Cherokee leadership from 1975-1985, through the lens of one Principal Chief: Ross O. Swimmer. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the leadership characteristics of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer?

2. To what extent did these leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics?

3. From a tribal perspective, did they make a difference? To what extent?

Research Design

The study of Ross O. Swimmer's leadership was conducted following a qualitative research framework. Mr. Swimmer was selected due to his election and service as Principal Chief to the Cherokee Nation during the time period of 1975-1985.

Case studies involve standard methodological strategies of qualitative research such as utilizing an inductive investigative strategy, interviews and document collection (Merriam, 2002). According to Merriam, "The case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). It is the unit of analysis that defines the case study, and not the topic under investigation.

At this point, some care must be given. The researcher believes the study falls within the definition of a case study, as the unit of analysis is the leadership of the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, specifically the leadership characteristics of Ross Swimmer. Of course, the study would not have been possible without the data from Chief Swimmer. Also, one must note the study is "bounded by time and activity" (Creswell, 1994, p. 12).

Obvious conclusions drawn from the data are not the full picture of Ross Swimmer as a leader. Much is left untold by the interview participants. The researcher

accepts that this is just the way it is in Cherokee culture. As Chapman (interview participant) shared, “They [Cherokees] will keep certain information away from you.”

Researcher

As a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, the researcher is familiar with both the Indian and Anglo-American ways of knowing. The researcher is a product of both thought-worlds, as she was the second of three daughters born to a White mother and half-blood Cherokee father in the historic Old Hastings hospital in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The researcher’s grandfather, Andrew Sunday (full-blood), and great-grandfather, Sheriff Jess Sunday (full-blood), were involved in the Cherokee communities and Cherokee politics (Bumpers & Littlefield, 2004). Before Removal, direct descendents of the researcher’s great-grandmother represented the Old Cherokee Nation politically (Starr, 1984, p. 584-585). Public political service to the Cherokee Nation came later in the researcher’s father’s life. However, throughout his life, Clarence Sunday was a friend, advisor and educator to untold numbers of Cherokees. Counted in this large circle were the names of W. W. Keeler, Ross Swimmer and Wilma Mankiller. The researcher’s father was an elected member of Ross Swimmer’s and Wilma Mankiller’s Councils. He unexpectedly died during his third term of office. Clarence Sunday’s life was commemorated by a White funeral service in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, followed by a traditional Cherokee burial service in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Due to the researcher’s family history, and the nature of the Cherokee people, the researcher will either know or be known by all interviewees. Although a continual check

was made for presence of researcher bias, bias may be present at the subconscious level due to the researcher's life history.

Although the terms American Indian, Native American and Indian are used throughout the content of the researcher's work, the researcher's preference is Indian, as this term was the commonly accepted label the researcher heard growing up in the Cherokee communities.

Reflexivity

Recent qualitative methods have come to recognize the importance of reflexivity. According to Patton, the term has evolved in its meaning to a "way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 299). In other words, reflexivity is a process of observing oneself. The data the researcher collects from observations of self, and interactions with self, are considered just as important as the data collected from field interviews. Thus, the step of keeping a daily journal of information gathered from the process of reflexivity can prove to be a highly insightful assist to the researcher's methodology. A personal diary of impressions was kept, with notations made after each interview. As source material of Ross Swimmer's tenure as Principal Chief, along with personal biographical information about Ross Swimmer, is quite scant, heavy reliance was given to the interviews.

Selection of Participants

Since the interview participants of the case study were few in number, the technique of purposeful sampling was the logical choice for gathering rich data. "In

purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by information considerations” [not statistical considerations] (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). The interview participants were purposefully selected in an attempt to achieve a balanced study. In order to gain data of depth and breadth for the case study, the researcher attempted to include tribal members with a favorable impression of Swimmer’s leadership, those that were critical, and those maintaining a neutral stance. The researcher contacted Cherokees who were living during the selected time period, 1975-1985, witnessed, participated in, or had key knowledge of Swimmer’s leadership traits as Principal Chief and were thought to have an understanding about how he implemented his tribal leadership ideas.

Because the likelihood of opportunistic or emergent sampling exists in the case study design, the researcher remained open to taking advantage of unexpected opportunities for important data collection while in the natural settings of Tahlequah, Oklahoma; Tulsa, Oklahoma; or Bartlesville, Oklahoma. A total of twelve participants were interviewed. They were:

The Interview Participants

1. Ross O. Swimmer – Principal Chief: Tulsa, Oklahoma;
2. Margaret Swimmer – Wife of the Principal Chief: Tulsa, Oklahoma;
3. Dr. Richard Allen – Employed, 1982, during Ross Swimmer’s third term as the Cherokee Nation’s Johnson-O’Malley Coordinator. Current Policy Analyst for the Cherokee Nation: Tahlequah, Oklahoma;

4. Dr. Neil Morton – Director of Education during Ross Swimmer’s first term.
Currently Director of Education of the Cherokee Nation: Tahlequah, Oklahoma; Stilwell, Oklahoma;
5. John Ketcher – Elected Council Member, 1983, during Ross Swimmer’s third term. Voted by the Council, 1985, to become Deputy Chief of the Cherokee Nation when Ross Swimmer resigned to become head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Tahlequah, Oklahoma;
6. David Cornsilk – Employed, 1985, by the Cherokee Nation as a Research Analyst (genealogist): Tulsa, Oklahoma;
7. Marion Hagerstrand – Friend of W. W. Keeler. Cherokee Citizen: Tahlequah, Oklahoma;
8. Don Vaughan – Tribal Senior Accountant. Employed 1980. Mr. Vaughan has worked for all four modern Cherokee Chiefs (Ross O. Swimmer, Wilma Mankiller, Joe Byrd, Chadwick Smith). Current Director of Evaluation and Compliance: Tahlequah, Oklahoma;
9. Tom Mooney – Archivist for the Cherokee Nation Historical Society: Tahlequah, Oklahoma;
10. Betty Sharp Smith – Personal friend of W. W. Keeler. Fluent, native speaker. Co-authored, *Beginning Cherokee*, with Ruth Bradley Holmes: Bartlesville, Oklahoma (deceased since interview);
11. Patsy Eades Morton (wife of Neil Morton) – Elected to Cherokee Council 1974, 1979, 1983: Stillwell, Oklahoma;

12. Gary Dean Chapman – Council member, businessman, advisor to Ross Swimmer:
Currently, President of the Bank of Cherokee County, Hulbert, Oklahoma.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Case studies involve standard qualitative research such as utilizing an inductive investigative strategy, interviews and document collection. How the data were gathered and interpreted by the researcher is at the core of the case study. The final product, the narrative, is presented as a story to the reader, rich in detail. The objective is for the narrative to be taken by the reader and translated into a meaning that adds to their personal knowledge or transfers to existing case studies. To analyze the data, the researcher used Stake's four steps of case study analysis: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, correspondence, and naturalist generalizations.

The Power of Observation

Physically being in the location under study gave the researcher the advantage of accurately describing the setting and people under observation. The purpose of observation is "to discover and understand . . . the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" [in the study] (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). "People come to know a great deal by observation" (Deloria, 2006, p. x). Buchanan, as an example, discovered during his fieldwork with the Cherokees, "These sessions and the many lunches we shared with the staff appeared, at first, to be a waste of time. We soon realized that many of the staff attitudes and expectations became apparent in casual conversation whereas they were more reticent under formal questioning" (Buchanan, 1972, p. 10). According to Sheldrake, "Direct experience is the only way to build up an understanding that is not

only intellectual but intuitive and practical, involving the senses and the heart as well as the rational mind” (Sheldrake, 1991, p. 213).

Context for Selection of Interviewees

Setting up interviews with Cherokee participants was a time-consuming process. From the researcher’s experience, conversations with Indian people often are used to re-establish ties and trust, and are seldom short in duration. Multiple topics are often discussed and can include mutual relatives, the retelling of old stories, local gossip, and past and current Cherokee politics.

Beginning with people in the Nation known to the researcher, each individual was telephoned or emailed to introduce the research project, explain its purpose, and ask for their interest in participating in the study or to assist in suggesting people of the Swimmer time period possibly willing to speak with the researcher. The process was repeated on a deeper level when contacting people recommended but not previously met.

Cherokees, particularly elders, are suspicious of any “outsider” motive. My task was to find the mutual linkage of family members, friends and personal experiences within the Cherokee Nation, creating a bond and establishing an authentic level of trust. Once accomplished, “insider” status was accorded, and an agreement to meet was given. Five trips were made from Austin, Texas, to Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, to conduct interviews.

For the interviewee’s comfort, the interviews were set in the homes of the interviewee. There was one exception. One Cherokee citizen, living in Tulsa,

Oklahoma, asked to be interviewed in the home of a friend, known to both the interviewee and interviewer. Two interviews were conducted by telephone.

After the interviews were completed and the tapes transcribed, a copy of the respective interview was either emailed or mailed to the appropriate interviewee for his or her files, and was used as a check on any misinterpretation of their information that might have been made on the researcher's part. A follow-up telephone call was made to each interviewee to re-discuss the use of their actual name as opposed to using a pseudonym. There was no objection by any interviewee to the use of their name. Copies of the chapter pages were mailed to each interviewee where their names were used. Additionally, the full manuscript was read by a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, Chapter VI was given to a participant to review, and Ross O. Swimmer was provided a copy of his autobiographical profile.

Historical narrative is combined with the case study as the information production style. The researcher expected much of the data coming from the interviews to be in story form, as, according to Fixico, "Story is the basis of the Indian mind . . . [the] American Indian oral tradition and power of a story is much more than the story and the storyteller. It is Indian reality" (Fixico, 2003, p. 21-26).

Characteristics of Cherokee Communication

In almost every interview, each participant balanced a description of a negative characteristic of Swimmer with a positive characteristic. To the researcher, this finding was not surprising, as Cherokee conversational structure contains the essential Cherokee worldview element of harmony to counter dispute. An additional point is, valuable

depth, richness, and accuracy of information is eventually shared by the Cherokee, but only by multiple conversations over a great length of time and with the establishment of trust.

Listening to and transcribing interview tapes added outside-the-ordinary additional time to the study, due to three characteristics of Cherokee communication. The Cherokee tendency of lowering their speech volume at the end of a sentence became the first reminder to the researcher to listen carefully to each interviewee's every spoken word. It took some practice on the researcher's part, after listening and remembering the tonal inflections of the Cherokee to drop their sound volume at the sentence's last word; otherwise, the entire meaning of their message or lesson could be missed.

A second characteristic of Cherokee communication is to indirectly answer a question by discussing several topics, often seemingly unrelated, before answering the original question. It would be a mistake on the interviewer's part to think the question asked had been forgotten. In Indian conversations, time and patience are a must. For example, a question was posed to Ross Swimmer to end the first interview: "Tell me what you do right now." Without hesitation, Mr. Swimmer delivered a thirty-minute monologue on the genesis of the Indian Trust, the relationship and duties of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the reservation tribes, the Eloise Cobell class action suit, the Washington D.C. actors and intricacies involved in their solicitation of his help with the Indian Trust problem, and the present condition of tribal leadership in Indian Country. Just as I was beginning to wonder if Mr. Swimmer had forgotten my question, he said, "But, my job today – this is the question you asked, however, is to run the Trust." This

statement was followed by his current job description and an answer to the original question.

A third Cherokee communication characteristic is that the information requested is not given directly. Instead, information is meted out in a circular manner. Often, the information given between the question asked and the answer given is out of time sequence. To an interviewer, utilizing direct interpretation or trying to make sense of what has been said by the interviewee, the Cherokee communication style can be confusing and disorienting. However, everything said has a purpose and is important. Making sense of what had been articulated by most of the interviewees required the interviewer to place herself into the thought-world of the Cherokee.

Use of Documents

The Cherokee Nation News, published weekly, along with a supplementary newspaper, *The Cherokee Voices*, published for a brief time during Swimmer's administration, were found to be important data sources for the case study. Both newspapers provided reliable documentation for comparative analysis to the information given in the interviews.

Although not a large newspaper, *The Cherokee Nation News* had a circulation in all but five of the United States: Wisconsin, Vermont, Rhode Island, Maine and South Carolina. Additionally, subscribers were listed in Germany, Puerto Rico and Canada (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8, Number 31, August 1, 1975).

The Cherokee Column, written by Swimmer from 1976-1985, and published weekly in *The Cherokee Nation News*, provided a rich source for using the strategy of

content analysis. The time span of the *Cherokee Columns* provided an opportunity to observe Swimmer's leadership development. The *Cherokee Columns* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV. While the interviews and observations were intended as the primary methods of data collection, the use of documents increased the study's credibility.

Added document sources for gazing into the Swimmer years of 1975-1985 were Swimmer's working papers, which are housed in the Cherokee Historical Society's archives. When the question was posed about the number of outside visits per year to study the Swimmer papers, a Historical Society archivist told the researcher that maybe four people come during a year to look at Swimmer's records. "But, they are usually attorneys coming to look at court cases." When asked how often people come just to find out information about Swimmer, the archivist said, "Not very often" (personal interview, June 2006).

Transcripts of the Cherokee Nation's Council Meetings, 1976-1986, were copied and made available to the researcher by the Cherokee Council House staff. These 494 pages provide a triangulation marker with the interviews, Swimmer's *Cherokee Column*, and the two Cherokee newspapers: *The Cherokee Nation News* and *The Cherokee Voices*. Viewed side-by-side, these documents create a moving picture through time. They show the progression in the development of the Cherokee Nation, which is a reflection of Chief Swimmer's leadership. As suggested by Stake (1995), multiple data sources, acting in strategic concert, provide a method for implementing the initial step of categorical

aggregation and direct interpretation in an effort to make sense of and understand the tasks of a Cherokee leader and his leadership characteristics in an earlier time period.

Data Analysis

“In case study research, data analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its context” (Herbert & Beardsley, 2001, p. 209). As this case study’s design is qualitative in nature, the study differs from quantitative research and requires different standards than the methods used in quantitative research. According to Stake, data analysis is not defined by a certain start time. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding a phenomenon – what does it mean? This process begins from the researcher’s first impressions. Analyzing data, making sense of the information, and interpreting one’s findings are defined by an uneven, ongoing process (Stake, 1995, p. 71).

Qualitative studies utilize common ways of making sense. Encountering the unfamiliar or something that relates to a previous experience, people automatically sort, dissect, interpret and categorize what they are observing. Stake refers to this process as “categorical aggregation” and “direct interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 72-74).

Taking the data apart and putting it back together again to form the most meaningful interpretation for the researcher are the first two of four strategies of action used by Stake in a case study. Threaded through Stake’s strategies is the task of the researcher to provide the reader with adequate narrative description of the case, allowing the reader to form his own interpretations based on the reader’s experiences.

Searching for patterns is Stake's third step in the analysis and interpretation of a case study. Stake has termed this process, "correspondence" (Stake, 1995, p. 78). Correspondence, or consistency of the data, can be found in direct observation, document review, the interview process, or coding. Often, direct interpretation, or just asking our selves, "What did that mean?" is sufficient. It is the researcher's responsibility to look at "important episodes and passages of texts over again and again, reflecting, triangulating, being skeptical about first impressions and simple meanings" (Stake, 1995, p. 78).

Taking apart data in a discreet manner and putting it back together again to group and form concepts comprise the steps of open coding and axial coding (Merriam, 2002). As patterns are winnowed down, selective coding integrates and identifies interrelated patterns. The researcher used the method of coding for data tracking. Initially, the taped interviews were transcribed. A hard-copy was printed and placed in a labeled folder. The hard-copy was read to re-familiarize the researcher with the Cherokee communication style. The open coding process began after a second reading of the interview transcripts to search for emerging categories and patterns. Margin notations were made. Identified categories and patterns were transferred to three-by-five index cards, and assigned line numbers and an identifying interview tape number.

Stake's fourth step in a case study's analysis is "naturalistic generalizations." The case study narrative is presented in a logical manner, and personalizes the time and setting of the study to the extent the reader is provided a vicarious experience. Through the use of narrative, the end product needs to be as richly descriptive as possible to provide the reader this imaginative experience (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). "Emphasizing

time, place, and person are the first three major steps” (Stake, 1995, p. 87). Readers can add to the trustworthiness of the study by relating his/her own prior experiences to the newly engendered “naturalistic generalization.”

In the primary objective of searching for meaning and understanding, the researcher himself/herself is the primary instrument of data collection. The analysis of the data is inductive as opposed to the positivist, deductive method used by the quantitative researcher.

Yin posits that case studies of histories differ from real time case studies, in that “they are limited to phenomena of the past where relevant informants may be unavailable” (Yin, 1981, p. 59). Fortunately, Swimmer was available for the proposed study of a past time period of interest. Further, Yin states a “history” case study may be considered an “alternative research strategy . . . not linked to a particular method of data collection” (Yin, 1981, p. 59).

Since the proposed study involved people with a different worldview, Patton recommends the identification of phrases, terms and practices that are used by the culture under study. Patton further advises the researcher to employ a method of detachment by giving credence to etic analysis (the outsider’s view) as opposed to an emic analysis (the insider’s view) [Patton, 2002, p. 84].

As patterns of distinctive leadership characteristics emerged from the proposed case study, the researcher used Stake’s four steps of data analysis to contrast and compare Cherokee leadership, during the time period of 1975-1985, with the historical Anglo-European-American theories of leadership.

Trustworthiness

Conventionally, the standard used for determining the trustworthiness of research included the establishment of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 218). These four criteria acted as guides to satisfy that the findings of the research were true within the context of the study; to determine the degree of applicability of the study's findings to other contexts; to satisfy that repetition of the findings would produce consistency; and, to establish a separateness between the data of respondents from the bias of the researcher.

Guba confronted the problem of trustworthiness in qualitative research by suggesting the conventional four standards for determining trustworthiness be replaced with new terms better aligned with the epistemology of qualitative research. These standards are: credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219).

Credibility

One method of establishing credibility is using the technique of triangulation. Patton (2002) suggests the credibility of qualitative research depends on three distinct but related elements: (1) The methods should be rigorous, yielding high quality data; (2) the results of such methodological efforts depend on the researcher's credibility: whether or not the researcher is well trained, the researcher's status, track record and how he or she presents himself or herself; and (3) the philosophical inclusion of a belief in the value of "naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling and holistic thinking" (p. 552-553). The holistic perspective, Patton explains, is the

understanding by the reader that the study is a complex system and cannot be reduced to discrete variables (p. 41). Stake emphasizes the importance of methodological triangulation by use of documents, interviews and direct observation to increase confidence in the researcher's interpretation of a case study (Stake, 1995, p. 107-114).

Transferability

The case report is an excellent medium for providing to the reader the thick description considered essential in offering confidence in transferability. While the positivist makes "precise statements" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) about research findings, the findings of the qualitative researcher will be more empirical in nature. Thick description provides this vehicle. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is not the qualitative researcher's "task to provide an *index* of transferability; it *is* his or her responsibility to provide the *data base* that makes transferability judgments possible . . ." (p. 316).

Dependability

Would the current study be consistent if replicated? This question is difficult to answer. Attempting to do so assumes the same actors would be available. Given the time period under study of almost forty years ago, the actors' future presence, cooperation and memories might not be the same. Factoring in these unknown qualities, the study might be considered unique. Thus, meticulous attention was given to an audit trail by the researcher. The techniques of triangulation and the keeping of a reflexive journal added to audit materials. Research notes should be kept in detail. These notes included raw data as well as field notes covering all phases of the study.

Confirmability

Objectivity, or neutrality, has always been an issue in the scientific paradigm. Quantitative researchers put qualitative methods on the defensive by claiming an inquiry is not objective if it “emerges.” Further, how can there be neutrality if the qualitative study has “no careful controls laid down *a priori*; if the observations to be made or the data to be recorded are not specified in advance” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 124)? However, as Guba and Lincoln point out, the research from a quantitative method can be just as biased as research from the qualitative approach. “The instruments selected and decisions about data will be influenced by the predilections of the investigator” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 127). In sum, the authors believe the methods of the qualitative researcher are no more biased than those of the quantitative researcher. Furthermore, what objectivity or confirmability might be lost in the use of qualitative methods is more than offset by the potential rich insights coming from data using qualitative methods.

Always Expect the Unexpected

Cherokee people do not live by nor operate by a schedule or timetable. If the researcher is not aware and is not able to accommodate this particular Indian cultural norm, he or she will become very frustrated. Buchanan offers an example:

The Cherokee appear to approach an appointment time as a suggestion. If they have pressing business, the appointment is delayed. They usually come eventually. Delay or even the breaking of an appointment is not considered rudeness in Cherokee society – again, the individual has the right to do what seems best to him at the time, and no one is offended when he exercises this prerogative. Any White man making dates with Cherokees had better prepare himself to view time as the Cherokees do or he will find himself cooling his heels (Buchanan, 1972, p. 19).

Learning from the Cherokee requires patience and time. More often than not, the information asked for is not given in the form of a direct answer. A scholar's emphasis on what is important might run counter to what a Cherokee considers important.

Importance “was an adopted concept [for the Cherokee] for there was [originally] no literal translation in Cherokee for the word” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 12).

Buchanan is “convinced this method – allowing the subject to dictate the structure of the research rather than approaching the subject with a tightly-constructed model into which one forces data [or questions] is crucial to success [in interacting with the Cherokee people]” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 14).

An additional difficulty is encountering the need to establish trust. As an example, Buchanan had to learn in his fieldwork with traditional Cherokees that a scheduled visit might turn into four or five before the Cherokee person would talk with him. His frustration finally abated when he realized this was the Cherokee method of determining the interviewer's motives and whether or not the interviewer was trustworthy. Once Buchanan had passed the test of trust, “conversation could go on indefinitely” (Buchanan, 1972, p. 11).

Time and patience are essential tools for the researcher in Indian Country. Since any Native American tribe (the Cherokee people included) are an oral culture, direct questions are generally not returned with a direct answer. As Fixico explains,

The Indian answer very likely will be a story consisting of five parts. Time is the starting point. The relevance of time decreases as the “answer” progresses as “when” something happened is not as important as “why” and “how” something happened. Place is the next reference point in the story, giving context and relationship to a human experience. The middle of the story usually identifies the characters involved. The interviewer must listen carefully at this point, as the

interviewee discusses the event – the heart of the interviewer’s question – followed by a restatement of the original question, and the purpose. The purpose can serve multiple purposes: entertainment, teaching a lesson, passing along information or sharing knowledge” (Fixico, 2003, p. 25-26).

Summary

Chapter III outlined the researcher’s overall plan for the collection of data to achieve an initial understanding of the leadership characteristics of Ross O. Swimmer during a certain point in time and in a particular context. The purpose of the study and the research questions were placed within the circumstances of a case study. The importance of reflexivity was noted, along with a brief explanation of the presence of possible researcher bias.

The study was a qualitative single case study by design. Direct observation and keen listening were considered key skills in gaining insight and knowledge from (and about) Chief Swimmer. As Dean Elspeth Rostow (2007) remarked, leadership theories are not as important as the actual examples Swimmer verbalized and acted on in his position as Principal Chief. Leadership is defined by actions, words and personality, not theories (personal notes).

The issues of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were addressed. All unexpected events and last-minute changes to the researcher’s schedule were viewed as a positive to the study. Rather than a weakness to the integrity of the study, the researcher viewed any knowledge gained from unplanned events (such as the willingness of a Cherokee to talk on the spur of the moment) an added enrichment to the study of the leadership characteristics of one modern Cherokee Chief, Ross O. Swimmer.

Chapter IV is organized around three broad themes: (1) setting the historical, political and cultural stage of Tahlequah before Swimmer's arrival; (2) Swimmer's autobiography; and (3) Keeler, on Swimmer's career; Keeler's influence and legacy.

CHAPTER IV

Historical, Political, and Cultural Factors Influencing the Policies and Leadership of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer

Introduction

Chapter IV establishes the contextual setting in which Ross Swimmer served the Cherokee Nation as Principal Chief and provided leadership in an emerging nation. Salient to this setting are the dual, and often competing, influences of traditional Cherokee culture and Anglo-European-American culture. Insight into Cherokee thinking is provided with the example of a tribal story about how Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was selected as the physical site for the Cherokee Nation. The seeds for the story were planted in the year 1839.

The focus of this study begins after the passage of approximately 130 years from the tribal story to the late 1960s. The geographical area of Tahlequah, with its once predominant Cherokee culture, had grown more complex. Wahrhaftig (1975) theorized that the region now shared three distinct foundational cultures: (1) the traditional Cherokee; (2) the mixed-blood Cherokee; and, (3) the prominent mixed-blood Cherokees aligned with local White businessmen, administrators and politicians.

The variance in plural cultural characteristics is an important feature to consider when attempting to make sense of a particular environmental landscape in which one forms ideas and formulates theories on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a leader as that person attempts to work with competing forces toward meeting divergent goals. Working within the strands of the separate cultural domains of Tahlequah were different

histories, myths, family stories, knowledge, religions, spiritualities, values, practices and leadership. This was the complex environment Ross Swimmer entered when he arrived on the scene of history as Principal Chief of the Cherokees.

Fixico provides one example of diverging cultural characteristics among differing worldviews: “In contrast to the individualistic nature of the American mainstream, the indigenous cultures of America [including the Cherokee] emphasized a collective or communal culture” (Fixico, 2003, p. 69). Historically, people of like cultures tend to cluster together (Bass, 1990). To be a successful leader, Swimmer would face the task of negotiating a working relationship between the cultural cluster bonds.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the 1936 Oklahoma Indian General Welfare Act, and the 1946 Indian Claims Act are reemphasized. Although these legislative acts occurred before Ross Swimmer’s first election as Principal Chief, they affected his leadership. Two Cherokee Chiefs prior to Ross Swimmer, Bartley Milan and W. W. Keeler, are introduced. Lengthy space is given to Chief Keeler for three reasons: (1) Keeler provides an example of a modern Cherokee Chief exhibiting traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics; (2) the participants in the study were unusually forthcoming with information about Chief Keeler, which the researcher believes worthy of voice and page space; and (3) W. W. Keeler was Ross Swimmer’s mentor, and encouraged Swimmer to seek election as Principal Chief of the Cherokees.

Ross Swimmer is introduced to the reader and profiled from the first grade through his first job after graduation from the law school of the University of Oklahoma at Norman. Two of three Swimmer myths are featured: (1) the bank, and (2) the

changing of a Cherokee constitutional rule. A third myth – more time spent at the bank instead of working for the Cherokee people – is discussed in Chapter V. The “bank myth” developed before Swimmer was elected Principal Chief. The “constitutional rule myth” arose just before Swimmer’s first election. The third myth unfolded after Swimmer’s first election (1975). Therefore, the myths are placed and discussed within their appropriate time periods, to make better sense to the reader. The three myths are critical of Swimmer, and have endured time. Swimmer brought attention to the myths and often referred to them during his interviews.

The research findings presented in Chapter IV provide essential historical background to Ross Swimmer’s election and service as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. The findings are organized around three broad themes: (1) Setting the Stage: History, Politics, Policy, and Culture; (2) Swimmer’s biography; and (3) the importance of Keeler in the development of a Cherokee leader.

Setting the Stage: History, Politics, Policy and Culture During the Pre-Swimmer Years (1839 through the Early 1970s)

The Founding of Tahlequah

Reverence for place goes to the heart of the Cherokee. “Connection to the past gives us a reason for being, a sense of belonging, and a feeling for . . . our origins. It defines us. It tells us who we are” (Conley, 2002, p. 16-17). For these reasons, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was designated the capital of the Cherokee Nation in 1839.

A story repeated by the Cherokee people through the years tells about an arranged meeting between three Cherokee leaders to select a site for the capitol. Two men came at the agreed time and place to the Illinois River campgrounds. The two men waited all day

for the third. Nearing the end of the day, with only the two men present, one supposedly said, “Tah-Ah-Le-Quah” – “Two are enough.” Another translation of the phrase is: “This will do” (Faulk & Jones, 1984, p. 7). Regardless of the authenticity of the story, the place chosen for the new Cherokee Nation’s Capitol symbolized to the men an uncanny closeness, replicating the natural beauty of the Old Nation the Cherokees were forced to leave behind. In the context of this landscape begins the story about the leadership of Ross O. Swimmer.

Any discussion of the Cherokee Nation and its history tends to be very complicated. Utilizing extant literature in Chapter II, a contextual foundation was built to understand Cherokee history up to the point of Oklahoma statehood in 1907. This pivotal date marks a “before” and “after” timeline, demarcating the history of the Cherokee Nation and the characteristics of its leadership. The “before” represents adequate published research on the Cherokee. The “after” represents a research gap. Knitting together a contextual Cherokee historical landscape leading up to the election of Swimmer is important in attempting to understand and make sense of Swimmer’s vision as a Cherokee leader, the tribal foundation he built, and the continued controversies of today.

Following a historical timeline, the next section discusses the federal policy of Chief-for-a-Day, The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the Oklahoma General Welfare Act of 1936, and the Indian Claims Act of 1946. These federal actions did affect the Cherokee Tribe, and subsequently, the leadership of Swimmer. Three actors critical to the history of the Cherokee Nation are introduced: Chief Jesse Bartley Milam, Chief W.

W. Keeler, and Ross O. Swimmer. Chief Milam and Chief Keeler's work as Cherokee leaders returns us to the town of Tahlequah in the early 1970s.

Chief-for-a-Day

After Oklahoma statehood, the federal government still needed "leaders" in the Cherokee Nation to wrap up the business of closing down the Cherokee institutions and to continue the process of Cherokee land transfers. The practice, "Chief-for-a-Day," was created and implemented as an instrument of legitimacy.

The practice of "Chief-for-a-Day" came into being after Congress granted the right to the U.S. President to create this position of "tribal leadership" for the purpose of expediting the allotment of lands and rapidly dissolving the Cherokee government. Unfortunately, much of the business of the government and "Chiefs-for-a-Day" was occurring outside the knowledge of the full-blood Cherokee element (Wax, 1971). Also, the actions and decisions of the various parties of the federal government were conducted in English, and were not understood by the non-English speaking Cherokee. Finally, contractual decisions were usually made in Washington, D. C., far removed from Northeastern Oklahoma (Wax, M., 1971).

A Cherokee elder stated, "Anytime the federal government needed something signed, they appointed somebody Chief. And, they paid his expenses to Washington, I imagine. And, he'd go up there and sign them, come back home, and then they'd dissolve the relationship."

Swimmer offers an explanation for the government's need of Chiefs-for-a-Day.

As a result of the '06 Act [The Five Tribes Act] the government was disestablished. We [the Cherokees] were ordered to eliminate the Council, the Courts, to turn all of the educational facilities over to the state. There was one provision in the Act that said . . . these tribes shall continue in existence for such purposes authorized by law and they had one head official that would be appointed by the President of the United States. The purpose of that "savings clause" though was really to convey the rest of the land that the tribes owned because the tribes had received the land in fee title rather than as a reservation when the tribes were moved from the Southeast. So, to finish the conveyance of any land that might have been left accidentally – that wasn't allotted or conveyed to the United States government for sale – they had to have someone who could sign the deed. So, they left the office of Principal Chief there.

As the Fifty-Ninth Congress was drawing to a close, the Cherokee government, in preparation for statehood, in The Five Tribes Act (April 26, 1906), authorized tribal governments of the Five Tribes to continue in reduced form for the purpose of completing their land divisions (Debo, 1991). Not only was the office of Principal Chief retained, but Section 28 separated and identified two institutions: The Tribe of the Cherokee, and the Cherokee Tribal government.

Sec. 28: The Tribal existence and present Tribal government of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole Tribes or Nations are hereby continued in full force and effect for all purposes authorized by law, until otherwise provided by law (Cherokee Nation History Course, 2006, Chapter 1976; Sec. 15. p. 50).

From 1919 to 1936, six Cherokees were appointed as Chief-for-a-Day: W. C. Roberts, A. B. Cunningham, Ed M. Frye, Charles J. Hunt, Oliver Brewer, and W. W. Hastings. These appointments were made by Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, respectively (Conley, 2005).

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 Re-emphasized

Nine years before Ross Swimmer's birth on October 26, 1943, Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934. The purpose of the IRA was to ameliorate the destruction caused by the General Allotment Act of 1887 (also known as the Dawes Act), by allowing tribes to establish constitutional forms of government. According to Porter (1999), the federal government provided a "template" constitution for the tribes to follow. Initially, as Mr. Swimmer explains, the Oklahoma tribes, including the Cherokee, were excluded from the IRA.

The '34 Act didn't apply to Oklahoma because Oklahoma had no reservations. It was believed by most that in Oklahoma, all of the tribes had been terminated – that Oklahoma didn't have tribes anymore – because the 1906 Act was styled as an Act winding up the affairs of the Five Tribes. So, there was no effort to maintain tribal continuity. We had religious groups like the Keetoowah Society that met and continued with the Stomp Ground activities. We didn't have, at least as far as I've been able to determine, any kind of a real organized tribal situation until the 1940s, when Keeler came in (Ross Swimmer, personal interview, 1-2008).

Although the Indian Reorganization Act occurred before Ross Owen Swimmer's birth, according to Mr. Swimmer, the IRA would come to form the central aspect and focus of Swimmer's first term in office – his determination to write a constitution for the new Cherokee Nation. Swimmer believed a constitution would provide the Nation with a legal foundation to work toward the goal of self-sufficiency.

The 1936 Oklahoma Indian General Welfare Act

In 1936, Oklahoma adopted an Act almost identical to the Indian Reorganization Act, allowing for the self-governance of Oklahoma tribes (Oklahoma Indian General Welfare Act). The Act authorized Oklahoma Indians "[t]o adopt constitutions and

receive charters of incorporation giving them the right to engage in business, administer tribal property, elect officers, and manage local affairs” (Debo, 1991, p. 372).

The 1946 Indian Claims Act and Principal Chief Jesse Bartley Milam

The passage of the Indian Claims Act was intended as a remedy for perceived wrongs to Indian tribes caused by the federal government. In 1946, Congress issued an invitation to Indian tribes to sue the federal government. Just prior to this Act, in 1941, President Roosevelt had appointed Jesse Bartley Milam, a mixed-blood Cherokee, as “Chief-for-a-Day.” Bartley Milam had been elected Principal Chief by the Cherokee National Council prior to his being named “Chief-for-a-Day” by Roosevelt. Thus, Milam’s tenure was not just “for a day” (Conley, 2005, p. 205). This distinction is important, as it was a technical agreement by the President of the United States to appoint a Cherokee Chief already elected as Principal Chief by the Cherokee people. Roosevelt’s action was tantamount to the federal recognition of an elected tribal leader.

Chief Milam set about testing the 1946 Indian Claims Act by attempting to bring suit and a hopeful settlement against the federal government for certain Cherokee lands fraudulently disposed of after Removal. In various land negotiations, the Cherokee people were given 6,574,487 acres of prime grassland in fee simple, known as the Cherokee Outlet. Before Oklahoma statehood, the Cherokees were forced to sell their rightful property for \$1.40 per acre (Faulk & Jones, 1984). Chief Milam called a meeting, in Tahlequah, to select attorneys and prepare for the intended action. Milam appointed an executive committee to suggest a list of attorneys. One of Milam’s appointees was a man by the name of W. W. Keeler.

Chief Milam's remarkable effort to start the journey of rebuilding the Cherokee Nation was cut short by his death in 1949. Following this highly respected Cherokee leader, W. W. Keeler was appointed Chief-for-a-Day of the Cherokees that same year by President Harry Truman.

The Indian Reorganization Act, the Oklahoma Indian General Welfare Act, and the Indian Claims Act are important pieces of a historical puzzle that fit into the framework of this case study of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer. The legal imprint of the three Acts would affect the three terms of Ross Swimmer's leadership. However, without the initial work of Bartley Milam, the appointment by President Truman of W. W. Keeler as Chief-for-a-Day, and Chief Keeler's subsequent election as Principal Chief in 1971, Ross might never have become Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, and possibly no Cherokee Nation as seen in its current governing structure would have evolved.

Tahlequah in the Early 1970s

Buchanan (1972), Wahrhaftig (1975) and Baldwin (1985) came to similar conclusions during the course of their academic research regarding the political and cultural environment of Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Although their fieldwork in the Cherokee Nation occurred in different years, all three researchers developed a common theory about the town of Tahlequah, and its surrounding communities; these communities shared three separate populations.

First, the traditional, conservative Cherokee population was concentrated primarily in five of the fourteen counties comprising the Cherokee Nation: Adair,

Cherokee, Delaware, Mayes, and Sequoyah. The traditional Cherokees were extremely poor and isolated, yet they worked diligently to preserve their community structure.

Citing Wahrhaftig's work in 1968 as the "only private, careful study that has been made of the conservative (tribal) population," Buchanan states, "Wahrhaftig's population count for the traditional Cherokees was 9,200, with an additional 2,000 [Cherokee persons] from the local area participating in the traditional lifeways" (Buchanan, 1972, p. 47).

A second population identified by the three researchers was the mixed-blood Cherokee. The mixed-bloods were viewed as socially and culturally assimilated, and quite proud of their Cherokee heritage. "White Oklahomans reserve the term 'Cherokee' to refer to a 'better class of people': that is, assimilated Americans of Cherokee descent" (Wahrhaftig, 1975, p. 51). This class does not live like an Indian – a traditional fullblood (Wahrhaftig, 1975). Wahrhaftig identified the third population comprising the area's plural and complex nature as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.

From the agreement by Buchanan (1972), Wahrhaftig (1975) and Baldwin (1985) of the three populations, Wahrhaftig proposed a separate theory that the prominent mixed-bloods joined together with "White businessmen and administrators in a Cherokee establishment that has emerged to direct the affairs of the whole region" (Wahrhaftig, 1975 p. 52). Wahrhaftig theorized, the goals of this "Cherokee Establishment," were political power, economic and individualistic gain.

The Cherokee establishment is dominated by long-assimilated legally Cherokee Americans. From a white Oklahoman's point of view, the fact that these former citizens of the Cherokee Nation and their descendents have assimilated into American life is precisely what qualifies them for leadership over the rest of the Cherokees. Knowledge of white ways, not Indian ways, is what counts in the world today (Wahrhaftig, 1975, p. 52).

Ross Swimmer stated, “I would say that he [Wahrhaftig] may have his facts right, but his conclusion is wrong. Unfortunately, I’ve run into that a lot” (personal interview, 3-2008). Swimmer goes on to explain that one of the driving forces behind the reorganization of the Cherokee Nation was to enable the Cherokee Tribe to receive federal funding. Since no tribal organization or constitution was in place in Oklahoma, federal money had been directed to Western tribes, not to any Oklahoma tribe. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, federal agencies and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) were still under the impression the 1906 Act terminated Oklahoma tribes. In other words, no Indians resided in Oklahoma. The BIA’s mandate at this time was to administer services to individual Indians in Oklahoma, and to oversee their restricted land.

However, the political upheaval in the Cherokee Nation pre-Removal resulted in a factional split among the Cherokees. Researchers of this historical time period suggest the old factional split between Cherokees still exists – that animosity did not abate between the Ross Party and the Treaty Party (discussed in Chapter II) after Removal (Perdue, 1991; Woodward, 1988). The factional split theory implies that the two factions – separated by differing ideology, religion and politics – organized into two opposing political parties, and has survived time.

The paradigm of the Ross Party Cherokees was characterized by maintaining a traditional way of life, retaining the Cherokee language, and protecting the cultural integrity of the community. Ross Party full-blood Cherokee leaders upheld and practiced the traditional characteristics of Cherokee leadership; harmony and a spiritual component to their lives were central. Open conflict was avoided, and consensus ruled. Political

authority was vested in the community, not the individual. The leaders were chosen based on competence, and the leaders' self interests were sublimated in the interest of the community. These leaders, usually the ministers of the communities, were not authoritative. Instead, they led by example. Finally, regarding their decisions, patience was exercised.

According to Richard Allen (interview participant),

The community leaders, historically, were ministers. Those were your leaders in the community. Why? Not because they were chosen by God, certainly, but it was because of what they were doing for the community. They hear all of the trouble in a particular community. They know who is strong in that community. They know who will do what is needed to get done in that community and they help those things occur. We don't have the same kind of leadership today. Leadership is elected leadership and it depends on how much money or how persuasive you are in getting people to vote for you. That's not the same manner of leadership that Cherokee people have grown up with.

Ross Swimmer is not convinced a mixed-blood versus a full-blood feud exists in the Cherokee Nation. He leans toward a traditionalist worldview, in opposition to a Euro-American worldview. Pointing out that the original Dawes Roll only contained ten percent full-bloods; and that, by the time the new Cherokee Constitution was adopted in 1976, those numbers had dropped to less than five percent of the Tribe, Swimmer reasons, full-blood versus mixed-blood is not a factor.

In contrast, members of the Treaty Party intermarried with the local White population, and assimilated into the local culture of the predominant Anglo population. Although proud of their Cherokee ancestry, by the process of assimilation, this mixed-blood faction incorporated into its ideology many Anglo-European-American values inherent in the philosophy of Manifest Destiny – individualism, materialism, patriarchy,

hierarchy, competition, and control (O'Brien, 1989). The visible mixed-blood Cherokees integrated into the establishment of Eastern Oklahoma. The full-blood Cherokees were proceeding with their lives under a cloak of invisibility in their respective communities.

By 1970, Tahlequah's population totaled "9254" (Faulk & Jones, 1984, p. 122). Tahlequah and the surrounding area were rich with multiple resources enjoyed by the locals, students and tourists. Its amalgam of unique historical heritage, a respected state university, the natural beauty of the heavily timbered Ozarks interspersed with unpolluted naturally flowing streams, major rivers and popular recreational lakes, was an untapped haven for businessmen, developers and politicians. The region's mild climate and fertile soil favored agriculture and ranching. The population of Cherokee County, in which Tahlequah is situated, tripled from 1970 to 1980 (Faulk & Jones, 1984). Business was healthy; businessmen, both White and the assimilated mixed-blood Cherokee, profited.

Principal Chief W. W. Keeler

Specific examples of Cherokee traditional leadership emerged when several of the interview participants spoke of W. W. Keeler. The researcher believes the volunteering of this information, in such quantity, to be unique. A decision was made to include the information, as the researcher also believes the memories of these Cherokee elders to be important and additive to the topic of Cherokee leadership.



W. W. Keeler

Courtesy of the Cherokee Historical Society

John Ketcher, former Deputy Chief of the Cherokee Nation, provided one insight into Principal Chief W. W. Keeler's tenure.

You know when W. W. Keeler came and tried to organize the Cherokee Nation, why he visited a lot of the communities and he found in those communities some people who were kind of the general leader already in that community. He might have been a preacher or he might have been a guy that had been talking about forming the government. Now this is just my thinking. Keeler carried on Chief Milan's work and when Milan passed away, Keeler was declared Chief by Truman. He had meetings in the communities and they'd talk about forming the Nation again and I guess when W. W. Keeler got enough people to support him, people he called his advisors, I guess they began to write things down and directly he headed for Congress and began to talk to them about the possibility of the Cherokee Nation reviving its government because the BIA was not doing what it was envisioned they would do. We still had a lot of poor people in the Cherokee Nation, not many of them going to school beyond maybe eight or ninth grade.

In 1948, when Chief Milam selected Mr. Keeler as a member of his newly formed Executive Committee, Bill Keeler was managing a refining department of Phillips Petroleum Company, headquartered in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Within nineteen years, Mr. Keeler would become President and Chief Executive Officer of Phillips Petroleum. With his position came national recognition and power (*Phillips the First 66 Years*, 1983). From a junior summer survey employee to President and Chairman of the Board

in 1967, Mr. Keeler rose quickly through the ranks of a major U.S. corporate bureaucracy and its bureaucratic model of management.

Mr. Keeler, however, had many Cherokee employees in Phillips Petroleum.

According to Honor Keeler (Chief Keeler's granddaughter),

W. W. Keeler, much in the spirit of Cherokee resilience and vision, instigated changes at Phillips. He requested that Cherokees be hired at Phillips Petroleum Company. Initially a test was administered to all applicants. Keeler was informed that none of the Cherokees qualified for the job. Knowing that the Cherokee people were qualified, he took a look at the test. It required proficiency in English, and several of the Cherokee candidates could not pass it. Angered by the discrimination inherent in the test, Keeler disregarded the exam and hired Cherokees for these much-needed jobs during the Depression. This incident was an eye-opener for Keeler and, most likely, compelled him to want to become more involved with Cherokee politics (Keeler, H., 2005, p. 88).

According to one Cherokee elder, "That was part of his ethical thinking – the Cherokee way." The elder's comment was substantiated by a dialogue between Ralph Keen, Assistant United States Attorney, and Martin Hagerstrand, Director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. According to Ralph Keen, Frank Muskrat, a full-blood Cherokee, was always present during meetings with Mr. Keeler in Bartlesville.

Ralph Keen always knew his ideas would be accepted when Frank Muskrat smiled and his eyes sparkled. Mr. Keen soon learned, if Mr. Muskrat approved his ideas, Mr. Keeler would approve. Mr. Keeler trusted the judgment of his Cherokee friend (Keen, R.; Hagerstrand, Martin, 1993; *Historical Dialogue Regarding Cherokee Nation 1967-1993*; *Cherokee Nation History Course*, 2003, Sec. 20, p.4).

Marion Hagerstrand (interview participant) indicated,

Martin claimed he'd [Keeler] believe anything a Cherokee told him. He said, I might tell him something and he would question it. But, if a Cherokee said it,

he'd take it. I think that's really a strength. I do. Because when someone trusts you, you're usually trusted back unless you are very, very greedy and grabby and he certainly wasn't. The Indians aren't greedy and grabby. You share. You trust. Unless they've done you wrong. You see, you expect a Cherokee to help you because it's the way you do.

Ross Swimmer agreed with Mrs. Hagerstrand regarding Mr. Keeler's respect for the full-blood Cherokee. However, Chief Swimmer thought this characteristic would sometimes lead Chief Keeler to detrimental leadership decisions. "Bill Keeler believed no full-blood could commit a crime. He just honestly believed there were no people in the Cherokee Nation that would do anything to enhance their wellbeing at the expense of the Tribe, and he was a bit naïve in that regard. And, that led to some of the problems we had at the Tribe around that time."

Respect for W. W. Keeler was woven throughout all the interviews. While his Cherokee blood quantum was unclear, as one elder stated, although Mr. Keeler was the product of two cultures, he was Cherokee.

According to Neil Morton (interview participant),

Keeler was such a genius one could almost hear him think. And, Keeler's insight into the Cherokee way of life was fabulous, a level of understanding that was ironic because this ability had nothing whatsoever to his selection by President Truman as Chief-for-a-Day. His purpose was, as Chief-for-a-Day, to be that hand signing documents of taking more Cherokee land. He was not to govern, not to really get involved with the Cherokee's. But, Keeler did. Because of who he was, President of Phillips Petroleum and President of the National Association of Manufacturers, he was able to open a lot of doors that had been closed for a long time. These doors would "have continued to be closed had he not been a frequent visitor to the White House for overnight accommodations. He was just unique in that way because he felt comfortable in that situation and he also felt very comfortable sitting on a rock in Oak Ridge or Bell talking to a group of citizens.

Various characteristics of traditional Cherokee leadership continued to appear in interviewee memories of Chief Keeler. A picture of these traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics emerged through stories told by the various interview participants. The researcher chose to include this information to highlight the voices of the Cherokee participants, and to provide examples of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics.

1. Political authority vested in the community not individuals. He [Keeler] talked to you or to me the same way he talked to a Senator or a Congressman or anyone. He had great respect for human beings. He'd talk to one of the full-blood Cherokees, and patiently listen and explain how he felt about it. He met with people and they would talk, he would listen, and they would follow him.

2. Harmony and consensus. Mr. Keeler believed in the Cherokee way. He cared about seeing that everybody was comfortable; they were interested, and learning, and probably having a good time, too.

3. Led by example rather than authority or command. Their word was binding. I will tell you another story about Cherokee trust. Mr. Keeler spoke seven languages. Needing to go to France on Phillips 66 business, he studied French for maybe a couple of months. He was carrying on negotiations through an interpreter and they worked maybe a week before a contract was presented for signing. The interpreter told him what it said in English, and the others in the meeting also told him what it said in French. They said, "Here it is, sign it." He said "No," in French. "No, I won't sign it. That's not what the paper said. You told me it said one thing and the interpreter told me something different. I will not sign it." And, they said, "You speak French. Why didn't you say so?" And, he said, "Well, I thought you would tell me the truth and we'd all work together."

4. Avoiding open conflict and spiritual component, Keeler had a good relationship with the Keetoowahs. One incident was described by a Cherokee elder. During Chief Keeler's term, The American Indian Movement [AIM] set their sights on Tahlequah, with the intention of arriving to take over and "clean everything up." Mr. Keeler was there that morning. He was in his office, and told the people who worked there to open all the books and show AIM that the money was not going into anybody's pocket, that it was being used rightly for the Cherokees and the Tribe. Then the cars and pickup trucks came. Everybody got out with their guns, and he said to himself – he said a little prayer – "Let me say the right thing. Please, let this go right. Let's not have any trouble." Then he went out the front door of the Council Building and stood on the little porch, and they said, "What do you have to say?" He answered their questions, and he told them the books were laid out on the table. "You may go see. Just help yourself."

The leaders said, “Well, fellows, I guess we’d better go. Everything’s here and everything looks alright.” And, they turned around and left. Took the guns. The dialogue lasted about fifteen minutes. You can’t tell me that’s not a leader.

The Cherokee elder continued,

Mr. Keeler definitely was raised Cherokee and he had Cherokee myths and culture that had been ingrained in him. He had things that you hear about in his background. Let’s put it this way, he had respect for the Cherokee medicine men. They were very much psychologist and psychiatrists and understood emotions. That was part of his leadership. He could talk with you. And, we all went on Indian time and that didn’t bother him a bit. As busy as he was, if somebody was talking and it came time for the meeting to start, they kept right on talking. And, when everybody was ready to start the meeting, well then it started. Because it was 9:00, it didn’t have to start, you see.

As soon as President Truman appointed Mr. Keeler Chief-for-a-Day, Chief Keeler immediately chose his own committee to handle Cherokee affairs. “The members of this executive committee were culturally white individuals locally regarded as being from ‘old Cherokee families’ of the region’s social elite” (Wahrhaftig, 1975, p. 55-56). One of the first actions of the Keeler committee was to contract four attorneys to “prosecute Cherokee claims in return for ten percent of any settlement” (Wahrahaftig, 1975, p. 56).

Neil Morton recalls,

In the late 1950s through the 1960s, W. W. Keeler was under attack by a group of professors, organized under the name, the Original Cherokee Community Organization [OCCO]. They represented Wayne State and were funded by the Field Foundation of Chicago, Illinois. Their work resulted in several published academic papers, highly critical of big business, the exploitation of the full-blood Cherokee, were proponents of socialism and against a perceived Keeler establishment. Albert Wahrahaftig was a member of this group.

In a phone conversation with N. Morton after the earlier interview, Morton told the researcher his current understanding is that, with the passage of time, Dr. Wahrahaftig modified his earlier conclusions regarding the motives of Mr. Keeler.

Ross O. Swimmer: Biographical Profile

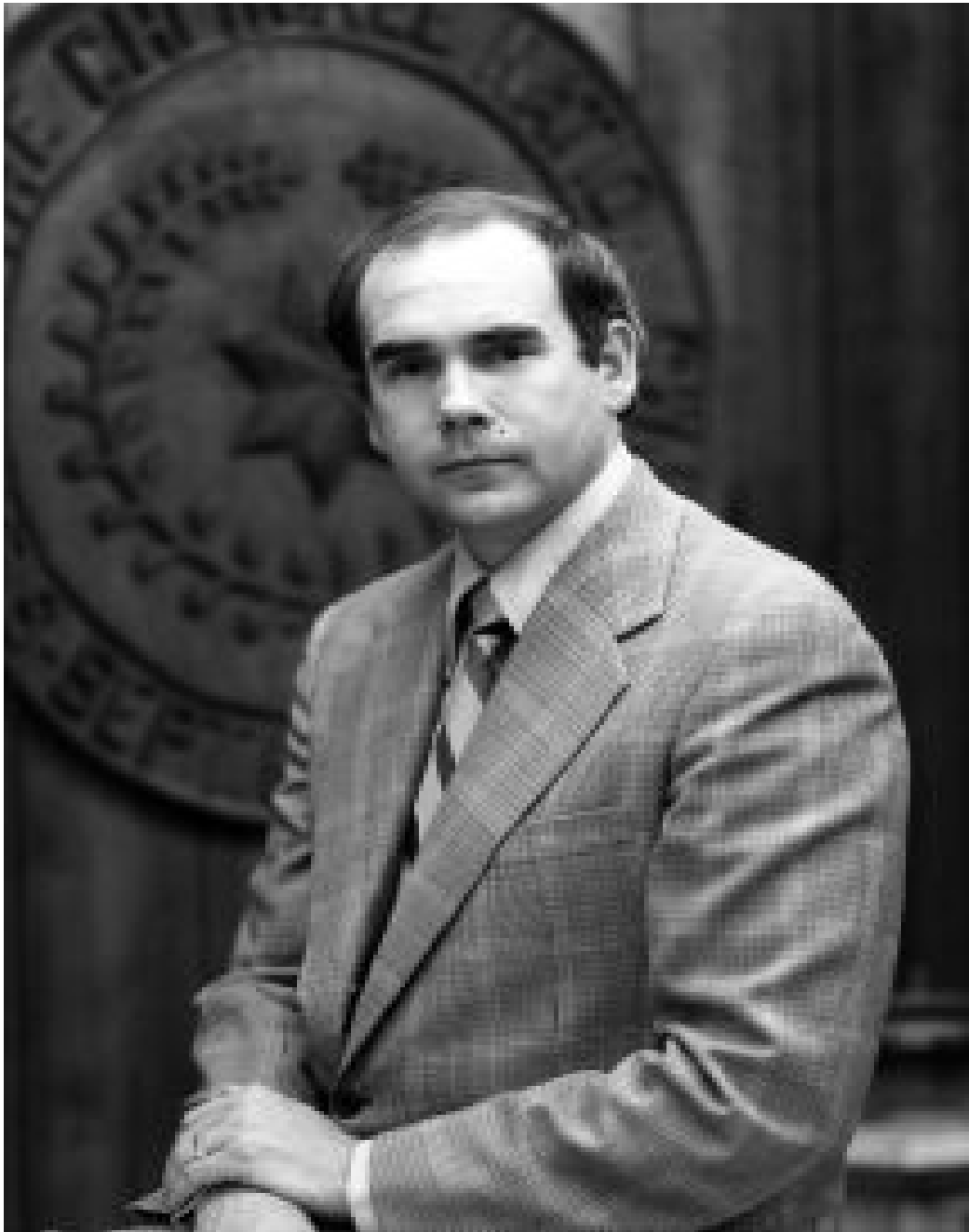
The Birth of Ross O. Swimmer – 1943

Ross O. Swimmer was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 26, 1943, during the federal government's implementation of the fourth federal Indian policy of Reorganization and Self-Government (1928-1945). Franklin D. Roosevelt was President, soon to be followed by Harry Truman. Although this policy period produced the stoppage of allotting Cherokee lands with the passage of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, no recognition of a Cherokee Nation existed, as the Cherokee Nation's government had been dissolved by the federal government in 1906. According to Swimmer, "All lands of the Five Tribes were allotted, unlike some Western tribes that had not completed their allotments by 1934" (according to the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act).

The Indian side of Swimmer's existing family came to adulthood during the prior harsh federal Indian policy of Allotment and Assimilation (1887-1928)]. As a result of Allotment and Assimilation, Owens writes, "Indian people clung to family, community, clan, and tribe through this half-millennium of deliberate, orchestrated, colonially and federally designed physical and cultural genocide" (Owens, 1998, p. 147). Owens continues: "Tribal people have deep bonds with the earth, with sacred places that bear the bones and stories that tell them who they are, where they came from, and how to live in the world they see around them" (p. 164).

After Allotment and Assimilation, followed by the new Indian policy of Reorganization and Self-Government (1928-1945), the federal government changed

direction by suddenly shifting to a sixth new Indian policy of Termination (1945-1961). Once again, the federal government was playing politics with and attempting to socially engineer the lives of this country's Indian population. Ross Swimmer's formative years were possibly indirectly affected by three federal Indian policies: (1) Allotment and Assimilation; (2) Reorganization and Self-Government, and (3) Termination.



Courtesy of the Cherokee Nation Historical Society

Ross Owen Swimmer (1943 – Present)

First Through Twelfth Grades

Ross Swimmer's first memory of himself is as a shy, introverted, five year-old. His first year of school started in Oklahoma City's Putnam Heights grade school, located near Classen Boulevard. Coincidentally, his teacher was also his godmother. One story told within the Swimmer family through the following years involved Swimmer's godmother. She sent a note home to his parents, asking them to have his hearing tested so she would "know how to deal with him." The accepted conclusion was that Swimmer was either not hearing well, or he was not paying attention in her class. Auditory tests determined his hearing was normal; Swimmer remembers his "teacher making some progress" (with him after the hearing test).

After Swimmer's first grade school experience, the Swimmer family moved to the country. Their new house, formerly the old Garland Nursery, was across the street from Lake Overholser, west of Oklahoma City. Swimmer had five acres of land to roam. He recalled enjoying the countryside, and spending a great deal of time outside exploring the lake area and surrounding swamps.

The Swimmer children were enrolled in a new school district in Yukon, Oklahoma, about four miles from Swimmer's home. Swimmer and his two sisters rode a school bus the four miles, each way, to school everyday. He does not recall that he was considered smart by the standards of the Yukon school, but rather that he had a lot of potential. He liked (Swimmer's word) school, though, and enjoyed learning. English was his favorite subject, but Swimmer admitted to never understanding math. His older sister always made perfect A's, whereas young Swimmer's report card produced a mix of

A's and B's. During these early school years, Swimmer had two or three very close school friends, and remembers the fun of playground activities. However, outside of his small friendship circle, he was shy in school.

When Swimmer was in the tenth grade, the Swimmer family moved back to Oklahoma City. They settled on 36th and Meridian, located in the Putnam City school district. Swimmer remembers the Putnam City High School, due to the rapid growth of the west side of Oklahoma City. While Yukon had about thirty-five people in Swimmer's graduating class, Putnam City had about 1,100 graduating students when Swimmer graduated in 1961. Swimmer did not mind the late high school move, as he discovered the opportunity to make more friends increased with a larger student population.

College

From Ross Swimmer's perspective, not pursuing a college education was never an option for the Swimmer children. All three knew they would go to college; obtaining a college degree was as expected as finishing high school. The Swimmer children also assumed the University of Oklahoma would be their end destination. Thoughts or choices of private colleges never entered their minds.

Ross Swimmer recalls that he was never directed toward a particular major. Originally, he considered pre-med, but "chemistry courses took care of that." Law School then became his choice. Swimmer chose a rigorous "3/3" program, where three years would be dedicated to undergraduate study followed by three years of law school. He would receive his BA degree after the first year of law school, and a law degree two

years later. “I made B’s in law school and had an average slightly higher than my undergraduate work. But, I really enjoyed the study of law.”

Money was tight for the scaled-down Swimmer family during Swimmer’s college years. After Swimmer’s parents divorced, his father remained in Oklahoma City, while his mother moved with Ross and his younger sister to Norman, Oklahoma. While Swimmer states he never had a good relationship with his dad, their relationship did not appear to be broken, as evidenced by Robert Swimmer’s introduction of Ross Swimmer to W. W. Keeler and Ross Swimmer’s selection of his father to be a member of his pre-1976 Constitution Cherokee Council.

To help cut costs, Ross lived his first year in a dorm, lived the second year in a fraternity house, and then moved in with his mother. Robert Swimmer provided no monetary support.

During Ross Swimmer’s senior year of college, he married Margaret McConnell. “We were 22 and 23.” Although Margaret was non-Indian, her family always believed they had Indian blood, probably Choctaw or Chickasaw. This belief was based on the area, south central Oklahoma, from which the McConnell family originated.

Ross Swimmer’s Siblings

Swimmer remembers being close to his two sisters. In addition to his sisters, he had one older half-brother, Robert Eugene (Gene) Swimmer, about fifteen years their senior and the son of Robert O. (Otis) Swimmer from his first marriage. Because of his half-brother’s influence and Swimmer’s admiration for his half-brother, Swimmer

learned as a youngster to play the clarinet, a skill that would later earn him a music scholarship to the University of Oklahoma and a place in the marching band.

Ross Swimmer's Mother (Virginia Swimmer)

Ross Swimmer stated that his mother was a “very attractive redhead,” and her side of the family was “pure English.” Ross gives her credit for being the “glue” that held the family together. Swimmer described his parents’ marriage as abusive, and indicated that his mother stayed in her marital relationship as long as she did “for the kids and for religion.” After twenty years, however, his parents’ marriage finally ended in divorce. Swimmer’s mother never re-married.

Swimmer’s mother worked off and on during her marriage. Swimmer recalls that his mother’s last job was with the Federal Aviation Administration in Oklahoma City, as an aircraft title examiner. In order to improve her position, she went to law school around age 55, and received her law degree from Oklahoma City University.

Swimmer does not remember his mother being particularly interested in Indian affairs. Prior to her divorce, the family would go to Locust Grove, Oklahoma, for visits with relatives with Robert (Swimmer’s reference to his father), as well as to Anadarko, Oklahoma, to the powwows of the western tribes. But, neither his mother nor father talked around the Swimmer house about Indian affairs.

Ross Swimmer's Father (Robert Otis Swimmer)

Robert Otis Swimmer was an attorney. According to his son, Ross Owen Swimmer, his dad was alcoholic and could be abusive when he drank too much. Further, Swimmer labeled his dad as selfish, citing proof that his dad never provided any financial

support for the family after his parents' divorce. Swimmer's father, however, eventually introduced his son Ross to W. W. Keeler, leading Swimmer to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and his eventual employment with the Cherokee Nation.

Ross Swimmer believes W. W. Keeler appointed his "dad" to an advisory committee after Ross's graduation from OU Law School. Swimmer "thinks" his dad was involved in Cherokee issues "off and on," but the two did not talk about these issues.

Although Robert Otis was one-half Cherokee, according to Swimmer, his dad looked like he was fullblood. However, Swimmer does not recall ever recognizing his dad as "Indian."

Ross Swimmer never knew his grandfather, Cull Swimmer; Cull Swimmer had died in the influenza epidemic around 1919. Cull Swimmer's father, Washington Swimmer, served on the last Cherokee Council before its 1906 disbanding. Swimmer could not recall if his great-grandfather was a Vice-Chief, or "what they were called back then. Just that Washington Swimmer was in the government from 1894 to 1906." Prior to Swimmer's election as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the history of service to the Cherokee people of Swimmer's father and great-grandfather suggests a demonstration of generational Cherokee leadership.

Ross Swimmer's Thoughts on His Indian-White Background

Ross Swimmer maintains a definite impression of growing up in a White community. Although his father was "one-half Cherokee, had Cherokee features, and looked quite Indian," Swimmer considered himself White as he grew up. His mother's side of the family was English. "Dad was the Cherokee, although only one-half. His

remaining half was a mix of German, Irish, and Scottish blood. But, none of the parts took precedence over the other.”

Robert Swimmer’s professional identity as an attorney was an advantage to Ross Swimmer. This attorney identity provided a separate distinction from being Indian “insofar as other kids were concerned.” Swimmer believed his father’s occupation gave some the impression that the Swimmer family was “well-off,” and this perceived positive social status seemed to create jealousy. He recalls being occasionally teased by his peers about their perception.

The Swimmer family often visited the “old homestead area” in Locust Grove, Oklahoma, and the gravesite where Robert Swimmer’s father and grandfather were buried. Ross Swimmer does not remember viewing these trips as anything but trips to the country; and, as such, they were not thought of as being Indian trips. According to Swimmer, “There were aunts and uncles around. I don’t recall talking a lot about Cherokee issues. We just talked about people we were acquainted with and what was going on. The Cherokee Nation wasn’t in existence, as we know it today. There wasn’t such a thing as tribal politics. It was just what was going on in the day-to-day lives of Cherokee people. This would have been in the late ’40s and early ’50s.”

More than likely, a young child would not have grasped the fact that Cherokee leadership was operating at the Cherokee community grassroots level. According to Neil Morton, a member of W. W. Keeler’s original Cabinet, during this time period, the Cherokee people would gather in National Council. Out of this larger group, a coalition, the Cherokee Executive Council, was formed. A community might send someone to a

meeting one time and not the next, as any semblance of a Cherokee government was not legal under the existing federal laws. Through this method of sending a “scout,” as opposed to the appearance of the formation of a political group, the Cherokee communication and tribal cohesiveness were maintained during the two decades preceding World War II.

Lessons Learned from a Mentor

Ross Swimmer worked during college and throughout law school for a tree surgeon who lived next door. The tree business turned out to be an excellent job, as it paid well, and Swimmer could fit the hours into his academic schedule. Swimmer remembers learning a great deal from the tree surgeon.

Swimmer explained at length,

He taught me things like efficiency. I could today [pointing to a tree outside his livingroom window] probably cut that tree down out there and load it in the back of a pick-up [the interview was just following the aftermath of one of the worst, if not the worst, ice storms in the history of Oklahoma. There was massive tree damage as far as the eye could see]. Now, nobody else could do that. [For most people] it would take five pick-up loads to get that tree out. But, there is a way of doing it right and making it efficient. This saves time. He [the tree surgeon] was one of these people that was always very careful and cautious. These are the sort of life lessons you learn working for someone like that. Never raised his voice. Never picked on you. You’d cut the wrong limb off and he would say, “Now Ross, I want to show you something.” And, I’d say, “Yes Sir, I understand.” And, you’d never hear it again. If you made a mistake, he taught you about your mistake and that was the end of it. That sort of communication with employees, I learned as an employee. This is where you learn some of the lessons that later help mold what leadership attributes one might have. When I got into the tribal business, I tried to apply the same principles. It is important then, whether working in tribal government, business, or anything else, to make sure the employees understand that leadership is not there to be a separate entity from the workers. You have to work together.

Swimmer stayed in contact with the tree surgeon, off and on, for many years.

First Job

Just before Ross Swimmer's graduation from the University of Oklahoma Law School, he fell and broke his leg while on a tree-cutting job. Although he went through his wedding ceremony on crutches, by the time of graduation, to his way of thinking, he was walking fine. Because the United States was still at war in Viet Nam, Swimmer planned to go into the Army, and made his appearance for a physical exam. Much to his surprise, he was deferred. The Army told him not enough time had passed since he had broken his leg. Newly married and with no income, Ross Swimmer was faced with having to "immediately scramble for work." His search for employment began in Oklahoma City.

When Ross Swimmer began interviewing with various law firms in Oklahoma City, he found a small firm with five or six attorneys. During his initial interview with the law firm, Swimmer recalled mentioning to the interviewing attorney that he (Swimmer) was of Cherokee descent. The attorney listened, and then told Swimmer that he had been in the 45th Infantry during WWII, and was quite impressed with the Indians serving with him. "He just thought I was the greatest thing. It was fine with me, and I was telling some things about my Cherokee background, and he hired me on the spot. Of course, some of the other members weren't quite ready to do that, so I had to go back for a second interview. But, I did get hired."

Since Ross Swimmer was interested in title work and corporate work, being hired by an attorney who was a leading title attorney in the area was fortuitous for him. The two men developed a legal practice around representing builders and developers, and

specializing in low- and moderate-income housing through a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program. The HUD program was new; it was lucrative to Ross and the second attorney involved, and they were “in on the ground floor.”

During the four years of working with the Housing and Urban Development program, Ross Swimmer noticed that Indian tribes were also covered by the HUD program. In a conversation with his father, he learned about the Cherokee Housing Authority. The Authority had been created under state law, as the state permitted Indian tribes to create the housing authorities in the same manner as cities. A requirement for a Cherokee to qualify for a HUD house, however, was to have clear title to an acre of land, and individual Cherokees were having problems getting clear title.

In 1970, Ross Swimmer made a trip to Tahlequah, with his father, where he was introduced to W. W. Keeler. Swimmer stated,

In talking to Keeler, I told him what I was doing and said, if there was something I could do to help, I would. One thing led to another, and I got to talking to the Housing Authority and offered to do some work with them. I had to go over a day or two a week [to Tahlequah], to help get the titles quieted. Then, it was about in 1972, I was offered a job over there to work with the Housing Authority directly and do some legal work in-house [for the Cherokee Nation], because they had been hiring lawyers from all over the area to try to do this title work.

Ross Swimmer’s original offer to do *pro bono* work would change his life’s direction. According to Swimmer, “I thought, well, I might be interested. So, I came home and told Margaret we had an opportunity to go to Tahlequah forward. We loved the city. We’d been over there a lot on vacation. So, we decided we’d take them up on their offer.”

Swimmer contributed additional instructive information:

When I went to work for the housing authority, there was a lot of turmoil surrounding what was called the “mutual help” Indian housing program. Not only were people required to give an acre of land with clear title to the housing authority, they also had to participate in the building of the house. The payments they would make later were based on their income. As a result of confusion surrounding the program, I took it upon myself to go out into the communities throughout the Cherokee Nation, to visit with people and explain the program, both for new applicants as well as those who already had a house. I often would be out three to four nights a week at meetings with people, attending community meetings and offering assistance. During those three years, I became well known around the Cherokee Nation.

Swimmer believes this work “in the Cherokee Nation proper for three years” was the major contributor to his election as Principal Chief in 1975. Furthermore, “I also campaigned hard for the absentee votes, and even spent time traveling in California, where a large number of Cherokees resided. Most of them had relatives within the Cherokee Nation who could ‘check me out’” (fax correspondence, 10-24-2008).

The elder’s following statement speaks a thousand words: “Chief Keeler brought him [Ross Swimmer] in as an attorney ’cause he’s Cherokee. But, I don’t know where he found him. I think, Tulsa.” The elder gives recognition to Swimmer’s Cherokee heritage and his much needed legal education. However, there is a negative insinuation by the elder, ending his remark by not acknowledging [pretending he did not know] Swimmer was from Oklahoma City, and not Tulsa. Swimmer, as was W. W. Keeler and John Ross (the stalwart Cherokee Chief before and after Removal), was the product of two cultures. However, Swimmer would never be described fondly by the Cherokees, as “he was Cherokee to the core,” or “he was Cherokee,” as were both the legendary Chief John Ross and Chief Keeler.

Honor Keeler (Keeler's granddaughter) offers this possible explanation: "I'm sure Granddad saw a spark in Ross Swimmer, who was a young man at the time, and went with it. He had a lot of faith in people, particularly young people, and always believed they could reach their goals" (email correspondence, 2008).

In the early 1970s, as a young attorney working in Oklahoma City, Ross Swimmer made a trip to Tahlequah with his father, Robert Swimmer, and was introduced to Chief Keeler. Keeler was impressed with the young lawyer, and Keeler asked Swimmer if he was interested in taking a position with the Nation's Housing Authority. Swimmer accepted and moved his family from Oklahoma City to Tahlequah. Swimmer was an unknown to the local Cherokee culture; either traditional or mixed-blood, Swimmer was an outsider.

Several of the study participants referred to Swimmer as an outsider. Taken at face value, a reader or researcher might assume the negative or dismissive tag to mean only that Swimmer came to Tahlequah from the outside area of Oklahoma City. Swimmer was not raised in the central traditional Cherokee communities of Sequoyah or Cherokee Counties. Chapman (interview participant) was asked why Swimmer was considered an outsider when Swimmer's father, Robert Swimmer, possibly his grandfather, and of record his great-grandfather, were active in the earlier Cherokee politics of their time period. Chapman (2008), in providing a nuanced meaning to the outsider label given Swimmer, indicated a meaning less obvious, a meaning Chapman referred to as "localism." According to Chapman, although his own (Chapman's) old family name, Sunday, still holds political power in Cherokee and Sequoyah Counties due

to the location of the Sunday family, the Swimmers were located in the northern part of the Cherokee Nation. Hence, the Swimmer name was not well known. Chapman added, “Remember – when the Cherokee put a tag on you, it sticks like glue.”

Swimmer’s arrival in Tahlequah occurred at a time during which the Cherokee people were not unified. Within approximately three years, Swimmer would become Chief of the Cherokees. Swimmer would always carry a Cherokee tag as an outsider.

*The Importance of W. W. Keeler in the Development of a Cherokee Chief:
Keeler’s Influence and Legacy*

*Steps Toward Re-building the Cherokee Nation Prior to Ross Swimmer’s
Election as Principal Chief (1946-Early 1970s)*

The following section briefly discusses the first steps taken by Keeler toward re-building the Cherokee government. Starting in a small, one-room office, with three employees and a modest amount of money, Keeler soon discovered the “strength in numbers” maxim by bringing the Chiefs of the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles together, to join with the Cherokees (the Five Civilized Tribes), for the purpose of lobbying Washington to enact a law allowing tribal elections for their own tribal leadership. The Chiefs (of the Five Civilized Tribes) were successful, as elections were held in 1971.

Keeler, recognizing the need for tribal operating money, began to understand the power of the 1946 Indian Claims Act, and began to investigate the Claims Act’s potential benefit to the Cherokee Nation (*Historical Dialogue Regarding Cherokee Nation 1967-1993*; Swimmer interviews).

After making the decision to not seek re-election, Keeler endorsed Ross Swimmer's candidacy for Principal Chief. This section gives an overview of Swimmer's first political campaign. Swimmer often referred to three myths that developed during his three terms of office. The first two myths are discussed in the following section.

Finding the Money

According to Swimmer, by federal law, under the 1946 Indian Claims Act, an Indian tribe was given a six-year limit to file suit against the government for perceived wrongs. In 1951, with W. W. Keeler's blessing, Paul M. Niebell, a sole practitioner in Washington, D.C., specializing in bringing claims against the federal government on behalf of Indian tribes, and Earl Boyd Pierce as co-counsel, brought suit against the federal government. The case would become known as the "Outlet Case." While Cherokees filed a number of suits against the federal government, Ross Swimmer believes only the "Cherokee Outlet Case," resulting in the per capita payment from enrollees on the Dawes Roll, was successful (Swimmer interview, 3-23-2008). When the researcher asked Swimmer for a clarification of this statement, Swimmer gave the following explanation:

As far as the lawsuits, a lot of tribes sued the government for improper taking of land and assets of tribes as a result of the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946. This was a special act of congress allowing tribes to sue in instances where the tribe could prove that the federal government did not act fairly to the tribe. I don't know the specifics of various lawsuits but I recall Earl Boyd Pierce, then General Counsel for the Tribe discussing some suits he brought in the early 1950s that were not successful. The Outlet claim was, as well as the Arkansas Riverbed Case filed around 1965. I think I also mentioned that we brought suit for the recovery of some railroad station grounds during my term that were settled for several million dollars – I think around \$5 million (Swimmer email, 6-5-08).

Swimmer made the following addition to his earlier email:

The Outlet claim was won around 1964 and most of it was distributed per capita. The remaining money was used by Keeler to help develop the office and restaurant site south of Tahlequah where the headquarters are. I picked up the work on the Riverbed claim after a settlement among the three tribes in 1973. The agreement was to split the ownership of the riverbed with the Cherokees owning the north half from Ft. Smith to the confluence with the Canadian River and the Chickasaw and Choctaw the southern half. Then the Cherokees owned all of it from the Canadian to Muskogee [Oklahoma]. It worked out to be about 2/3 to the Cherokee and 1/3 split between the other two tribes (Swimmer email, 6-6-2008).

Although the Cherokees were without benefit of in-house counsel during this time, and although the three men were separated by distance, Earl Boyd Pierce (General Counsel), Paul Niebell and Andrew Wilcoxon often worked together prosecuting land claims against the government. Niebell was in D.C.; Pierce was in Ft. Smith, Arkansas; and Wilcoxon was in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Meeting with Chief Keeler required making a trip to Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Based on the belief that the government had underpaid the Cherokees for the forced sale of their "Outlet land," a sale which freed land for the eventual and famous Oklahoma Land Run of 1893, the successful suit awarded fourteen million dollars to the Cherokee Nation. Although the suit was partially settled in 1961, after ten years of legal effort, and the \$14 million awarded, the lengthy litigation was brought to a final conclusion in 1973, by Earl Boyd Pierce, with an additional \$3,887,557 awarded to the Cherokee Nation by the Indian Claims Commission (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 10, March 7, 1975).

According to Swimmer:

There were two fund distributions as a result of the Outlet claims. I was working for the Tribe in 1973. I believe that was when the second distribution was made or soon thereafter. I believe it was given only to elderly members of the Tribe. The

1962 was a general distribution which was the one my father shared in. What was left from the \$14 million was used to build some of the new building on the land south of town in the late 1960s.

The task of locating all living Cherokee enrollees and the heirs of the original enrollees (defined as Cherokee by enrollment on Dawes Rolls) “took a long period of time” (*Historical Dialogue Regarding Cherokee Nation 1967-1993*). While the Bureau of Indian Affairs was handling the matter, the funds (\$14 million) sat in a bank and earned interest, later referred to as “residual funds.” When the \$14 million was finally distributed, the residual funds totaled two million dollars.

Swimmer explained:

Because no Cherokee Tribal roll existed, a great deal of time passed before the distribution of the original fourteen million dollars could be made to legal recipients. The money sat and earned interest. Because no Cherokee Tribe existed, no need for Tribal enrollment existed. But, a roll listing the people entitled to the money was mandated. When tribes make up rolls per capita, at least some individuals typically drop out. As a result, with the drop-out and earned interest, all but about two million dollars was distributed. The two million dollars was used as the first re-capitalization of the Cherokee Tribe.

The Congressional Distribution Act of 1962 directed the Bureau of Indian Affairs to oversee the payment of \$280.00 to each original enrollee (*Cherokee History Course, 2003; The Cherokee People, Pierce & Strickland, 1973*). With this precious “starter fund,” a small office was rented in Tahlequah, and staffed by three employees: a business director, a secretary/bookkeeper, and a Cherokee-speaking full-blood, to keep the lines of communication open between the Cherokee people and what was happening with the new Cherokee government in Tahlequah. A bank account was set up with the residual funds from the Distribution Act, over the objection of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as the BIA did not want to lose control of the money. However, Earl Boyd Pierce determined the

President of the United States had given the authority and duty to Chief Keeler to look after Tribal affairs. Given a clarified legal decision, Chief Keeler turned his attention to organizing a governing structure for the Cherokee people, and to developing programs for their benefit (*Cherokee Nation History Course, 2003, Historical Dialogue Regarding Cherokee Nation 1967-1993*).

Chief Keeler told his Business Director, Ralph Keen, “‘You understand, don’t you, that we don’t know where we are going to get any more money.’ We both knew that we had to succeed in everything we started, or we would probably disappear as a tribe” (Keen, R. 1993, p. 9).

From a One-Room Office to a Larger One-Room Building

The Cherokee “government” was growing. The Housing Authority was in operation and adding employees. The time had come for the Cherokee Nation to build its own office building. The original Tribal office, “15x20 feet total”, in downtown Tahlequah, had been leased (Hagerstrand, M. 1993, Section 20, p. 7). The Bureau of Indian Affairs was nervously watching the growth and budding independence of the Cherokee Nation, and issuing complaints about how the Cherokee Nation was spending money. According to Keen (1993), “Since the chief [Keeler] didn’t want to seem ungrateful because the BIA had always gone out of their way to help Chief Keeler accomplish his goals, he was willing to go along with BIA suggestions” (*Cherokee Nation History Course, Section 20, p. 7*).

However, events happened quickly. Keeler admitted to the need for more space, and a deal was struck with the BIA. “They [BIA] needed a new building, so we made a

proposal to them . . . to GSA [General Services Administration] . . . that we'll build you an office building and lease it to you. We designed and built the first office building out on the tribal site . . . We built the second office building on the site. This became the first tribal office building that was owned by the Tribe" (Keen, 1993, *Cherokee Nation History Course*, Section 20, pp. 10-11).

Phillips Petroleum allowed one of their attorneys to canvass the United States for businesses to locate in the fourteen-county area. Homes for Cherokees were under construction. Another new office building was standing, along with a restaurant and service station. Three employees had grown to three hundred, many working in the several manufacturing plants brought to the area by the efforts of Chief Keeler and the Philips Petroleum attorney (*Cherokee Nation History Course*, 2003, Section 20-11).

According to Ralph Keen,

I don't remember which one was the first one, maybe McCall Industries. It was a cut and sew operation that we brought to town and initially set up out at the tribal complex and we built the building for them. We also brought in a boat manufacturing plant at Grove, and that was GlassMaster boats. We brought in a cut-and-sew operation at Pryor. Fabricut was its name, I believe. And, of course, Cherokee Nation Industries . . . Even with all this happening, nothing was being done to re-establish the tribal government (*Cherokee Nation History Course*, 2003, Section 20, p. 4; p. 11).

The effort to build a Cherokee government, starting in 1967, was not without its critics. Hostility developed in the non-Indian community. The Tahlequah townspeople were suspicious of the Cherokees' success and growing prosperity. The word "communism" was bandied about. One elder remembers and comments on the town's mood at the time: "When money started coming in, it disturbed them. You know, we have our nice little whatever [town] and we run it the way we want to, and we say what

time people get off the streets, and we put up with the college. Just don't bother us. It was difficult."

Neil Morton stated:

After the Tribe was going, the complex built, Mr. Keeler told the tribal officials to pay everyone in cash and translate it into two-dollar bills. He wanted to make a statement and show the community the economic impact the Nation was making. A lot of times those things can backfire. The Tahlequah business community didn't like it. They didn't want to see all of those two-dollar bills. One of their complaints or excuses was that the store clerks were thinking they were twenty-dollar bills.

Strength In Numbers

Regarding the coalition of the leaders of the Five Civilized Tribes, Swimmer related the following.

I would give him [Keeler] the credit, although I don't have direct information, that he [Keeler] was the leader of the group of five tribes leadership to go to Washington and get legislation enacted that allowed for the first time since statehood to have the – I think the law reads – the popular selection of the Chiefs and Governor of the Five Civilized Tribes. I don't think they used the word election. I think they used selection and I'm not sure why that was done, but that was the first time there was recognition that a tribe existed since statehood – recognition by the federal government.

Swimmer also believes a part of Keeler's success was attributable to the Outlet suit filed by the Cherokee Nation. Swimmer deduces that, since the suit was filed in the name of the Cherokee Nation, the suit would not have been successful if the courts had been unwilling to recognize that a Cherokee Nation existed. Winning the suit gave underpinning strength to the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the Cherokee Nation by the courts. "We had a good group of Chiefs back then."

Expanding on his comment, Chief Swimmer said:

The Chiefs, during the '60s and early '70s, had been appointed by various Presidents. There were no trappings of a tribe then and they seemed more altruistic in their attitudes toward their tribes and their heritage. Since the tribes had no formal governments, these leaders represented the tribes primarily as advocates for redressing land takings and helping individual Indian people. They had other jobs and received little or no pay for their tribal work.

Buoyed by the outcome of the Outlet case, Chief Keeler supported Cherokee attorneys Andrew C. Wilcoxon and Earl Boyd Pierce filing a 1966 suit, which would come to be known as the Riverbed suit. Damages were sought against the “State of Oklahoma, sixteen oil companies, and two sand and gravel companies” (Pierce & Strickland, 1973, p. 70), for a portion of the Arkansas River owned by the Cherokee Nation. The river, land and riverbed were developed and used by the offending parties without consideration to the Cherokee Nation. The Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations joined the Cherokee Nation in 1967. The Riverbed lawsuit would be an issue requiring Chief Swimmer’s attention throughout his ten years as leader of the Cherokees.

W. W. Keeler Becomes the Elected Chief of The Cherokees

During an interview, Neil Morton related,

Switching from appointed Chief to elected Chief then later electing a council was a tremendous undertaking. It took a tremendous amount of organization. There were political disagreements; procedural disagreements in that growth process. There were divisions that happened. We still see them today.

From admitted hearsay, Ross Swimmer’s understanding of the Keeler election was a hurried affair. Supposedly, voting was open to anyone enrolled in the Cherokee Nation, and the rules for enrollment were very loose. As a result, little time was allocated to establish absentee voting or even polling places.

With all of the accolades and acknowledgments of W. W. Keeler's untiring self-service to the initial establishment of the Cherokee Nation, a cloud of controversy marred the end of Keeler's four years as elected Chief of the Cherokees. First, through its Cherokee Nation Builders and Indian Action Team, the Tribe was accused of "mismanagement and mishandling of funds" (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8 Number 11. March 14, 1975, p. 1). Since federal funds were involved, the FBI and the Oklahoma Crime Bureau investigated.

In a taped address to the elected Cherokee Community Representatives, Keeler explained the seriousness of the charges against the Nation over mismanagement of funds, and asked for people with information to voluntarily step forward. Second, Keeler addressed his situation of having been found guilty by the Securities and Exchange Commission of making illegal contributions to Richard Nixon's election by using corporate funds (Phillips Petroleum). Keeler told the representative he had paid all required fines. "When I feel like I have done something that is wrong, I intend to face up to it and pay whatever is required of me to bring things to a just solution" (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8 Number 11. March 14, 1975, p. 1).

No interview participant mentioned the accusation of tribal funds mismanagement or the presidential illegal contribution finding when discussing Keeler. Instead, the participants spoke fondly of Keeler personally, and praised the results of his leadership.

W. W. Keeler was a man of action. From 1949-1971, Chief Keeler utilized his strong leadership skills to forward the interests of Cherokee people. Keeler appointed his executive committee with members broadly representing the communities of Cherokee

citizens; he established the Cherokee Foundation using personal money; he organized the Cherokee National Holiday to commemorate the 1839 Cherokee Constitution, and he founded the Cherokee National Historical Society and the Cherokee Nation Heritage Center (Pierce & Strickland, 1973; *Historical Dialogue Regarding Cherokee Nation 1967-1993*). Of equal importance, Chief Keeler was continually searching for young, potentially capable Cherokee people to assume Cherokee leadership (Keeler, H., 2008). Perhaps Keeler thought he had quelled the political turbulence stirring the end of his term as Principal Chief by endorsing the young attorney, Ross O. Swimmer, to run for the vacated office. However, Cherokee Tribal early perceptions of Swimmer, and an act by Keeler, who was determined to assure Swimmer was named Keeler's successor, created misinformation and gossip developing into myths. Keeler would assume the unanticipated role as Swimmer's defender.

The First Swimmer Myth (The Bank Situation)

Ross Swimmer makes reference to three separate events during the term of his administration, and labels each a "myth." Whether the stories are true or Swimmer is mistaken in defining the perceptions as myths, their local repeated narration remains a part of Swimmer's legacy. The three "myths" concern: (1) Swimmer's employment with a bank; (2) a perceived change of the eligible age limit allowed by the Cherokee Constitution to run for the office of Principal Chief; and, (3) more attention paid to the business of the bank instead of the business of the Cherokee people. The "myths" will weave themselves through and into the political landscape of Swimmer's three terms of office.

In his ninth year as Principal Chief, the “bank situation” myth remained active. For example, during a Regular Council Meeting, Councilman Gary Chapman stated that, “he wanted to clear up some rumors.” Chapman stated, “The First National Bank is owned by Mr. Peter Manhart; he is the major stockholder. At the present time, the bank is up for sale; contrary to beliefs, it is not owned by Mr. Ross Swimmer” (Regular Council Meeting, Book 2, p. 128).

The “bank” myth developed when Swimmer accepted employment as legal counsel for the Cherokee Housing Authority. The second myth appeared just before Swimmer announced his candidacy for Principal Chief. The third myth, concerning delegation of Swimmer’s work time, unfolded after his 1975 election. As there were intervening events, the myths are not discussed consecutively. Rather, they are placed in their related time frame.

Bascom defines myths as “prose narratives [fiction], which, in the society they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past. They are accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed, and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt or disbelief. Their main characters are usually not human beings” (Bascom, 1965, pp. 3-20). According to Dundes, “The term myth is often used as a mere synonym for error or fallacy. ‘That’s just a myth!’ one may exclaim to label a statement or assertion as untrue” (Dundes, 1984, p. 1). Campbell adds, “In a culture that has been homogeneous for some time, there are a number of understood, unwritten rules by which people live. There is an ethos there; there is a mode, an understanding that ‘we don’t do it that way’” (Campbell, 1988, p. 9).

When Ross Swimmer accepted the position with the Cherokee Housing Authority, he moved with his wife Margaret and their two young sons to Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Their first home was purchased with financing from Muskogee Savings and Loan. Needing a home mortgage, Ross Swimmer introduced himself to the two Tahlequah banks, First National Bank and Liberty State Bank. Liberty State Bank was not helpful. Walking into First National Bank, Swimmer met the bank's owner, Peter Manhart, who helped the Swimmers arrange financing for their Tahlequah home through a Muskogee savings and loan. According to Swimmer, Manhart had purchased the Tahlequah bank, in 1971 or 1972, with a group of investors from Tulsa, led by Manhart's father.

Over time, the Swimmer-Manhart relationship would form the basis for one of the three major myths surrounding Ross Swimmer's leadership as Chief of the Cherokees. The myths still exist today. Aside from the fact that Ross Swimmer enjoyed Manhart's company, he admired and utilized his business acumen. These two realities provided the means for a public, speculative conflict of interest. Depositing Cherokee Nation funds into Manhart's First National Bank appeared to be favoritism. Adding to the speculative fuel, Ross Swimmer would soon leave his position as counsel for the Cherokee Nation to become President of First National Bank.

Discussing the "bank myth" in an interview, Chief Swimmer agrees the banking situation was and still is controversial. However, according to Swimmer, First National Bank had always been the bank of the Cherokees. "We've always supported the Tribe; and, in that era, the Tribe was constantly in overdraft. The bank never made any money

off the Tribe. In fact, they were covering overdrafts of the Tribe most of the time.”

Swimmer’s statement is supported by his report during the December 4, 1976, Minutes of Regular Meeting (of the Council):

Chief Swimmer commented on the fact that First National Bank had bailed the Tribe out numerous times. He pointed out that we do not always receive our grant funds on time, and First National has carried substantial overdrafts. He stated that, if there is any reason why they believe First National Bank is not the best bank in the area to deposit funds, he would like to know about it. He further stated that he didn’t think we should be punished because he is the President of First National Bank. He asked the Council to consider the resolution for the bank’s sake and for the Tribe’s sake (Book 1, Page 13, Council Minutes, December 4, 1976).

Resolution 5-76 was approved by the Tribal Council, for investment of day-to-day operating accounts for the Cherokee Nation, with a minimum of two designated signers on a check. The designated signers were: Ross O. Swimmer, Principal Chief; R. Vance McSpadden, Business Director; Scott Gregory, Finance Director, and Frank McLemore, Programs Director (Book 1, Page 12, Council Minutes, December 4, 1976).

According to Swimmer, “There was a big myth, around ’75 and even ’79, that Manhart had paid for my election – that the money came from the bank, or from him. He never – NEVER – put a dime into my election. I never received anything – any money – we paid for the election out of our pocket” (Swimmer interview, 1-12-2008).

Concerned with the legal propriety of the matter, Chief Keeler made a call to Earl Boyd Pierce for a legal opinion on the perception of a Swimmer/bank conflict of interest. Pierce responded by letter to Chief Keeler, with the opinion that depositing or withdrawing funds from a particular bank does not appear to involve conflict of interest

“on the part of an attorney who represents both the depositor and the bank” (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 15, April 11, 1975, p. 2).

Pierce continued:

On the other hand, I have learned that a relationship of debtor and creditor exists between the Cherokee Nation and the Bank. Any controversy arising out of this relationship would present a direct conflict of interest for Mr. Swimmer which I am sure he would quickly recognize and would stand aside in accord with his public statement and understanding at the time he entered the Bank’s service (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 15, April 11, 1975, p. 2).

At this particular time, the day-to-day operations at the Nation were cantankerous and filled with distrust. W. W. Keeler was frequently out of town on Phillips Petroleum business, leaving the operations of Cherokee business to his Deputy Chief, Sam Hider. The Deputy Chief was uncertain of his authority; the Elected Community Representatives were pushing for advantage; the Cherokee Nation Builders and Indian Action Team scandal involving Executive Business Manager B. Bob Stopp was under investigation; Mr. Keeler, himself, was under a cloud of controversy; and Ross Swimmer was asked by the Community Representative to resign. “Swimmer was told he had his hand in too many things to be concerned with Cherokee people [alluding to Swimmer’s involvement with the bank]” (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 13, March 28, 1975). Potential candidates were jockeying for political position, too, as it was clear W. W. Keeler would not run for Principal Chief in the upcoming election for Principal Chief (1975). Chief Keeler stated, in a Community Representatives meeting, that, “Positively, he was not a candidate for Chief, as he had served 35 years, but would help in any way when needed” (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8, Number 19, May 9, 1975, p. 3).

In an effort to calm the increasing agitation in the Nation, when W. W. Keeler returned to Oklahoma from a California business trip, Keeler called an open meeting to hear allegations, take questions, and provide explanations in an effort to resolve many accusations. Seven hundred people attended the meeting on March 31, 1975. One of the speakers that day was Peter Manhart, First National Bank president. He told the crowd he was a board member of the Cherokee Nation Builders Corporation, and a banker. If a conflict of interest were established, he would leave Cherokee Nation Builders. Manhart also named Ross Swimmer as a stockholder and officer of the bank. Regarding whether this constituted a conflict of interest, Chief Keeler said he would wait on a reply from the “Ethics Committee of the Bar Association, to clarify whether Swimmer, serving as tribal attorney and also an executive of First National Bank of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, might constitute a conflict of interest. Swimmer said this possibility had been thoroughly discussed before he accepted the job. He stated he assumed some management at Keeler’s request” (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 14, April 4, 1975, p. 1-2).

Perhaps, as the meeting was becoming increasingly contentious, using a traditional Cherokee method of changing the subject to cool the atmosphere, an elder stood and asked the following question: “What power do representatives have? Indians want to know. Leadership is very necessary. Tell us what to expect. People need to know” (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8. Number 14, April 4, 1975, p. 2). Chief Keeler made several points in his reply to the elder’s question: (1) He was interested in making progress; (2) only a handful of people were interested in helping when there was

no money; (3) to move forward, Indians must participate in the White man's world; (4) Indians must do something for themselves in order to get ahead; (5) until the new constitution was approved, the community representative would remain the advisory body to the Chief (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8, Number 14, April 4, 1975, p. 2). Swimmer then asked the audience if there were any specific complaints against him. None were voiced. The meeting soon came to an end, and the large crowd dispersed.

Ross Swimmer's Candidacy for Principal Chief Endorsed by W. W. Keeler

Swimmer discussed Keeler's decision to support his candidacy for Principal Chief. Early in 1975, W. W. Keeler decided Ross Swimmer would make a good candidate for the next Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Both men were in the tribal office talking about the nine candidates who had filed to run, and both agreed none of them seemed to be of the caliber they thought could really carry on and do the job. Keeler finally suggested, "I ought to consider the job. I was reluctant because I had not been in politics. I just wasn't a real public person" (Swimmer interview, 3-23-2008).

Swimmer went on to explain how important the 1975 election would be, as the 1975 election was the first political race for a Principal Chief since the federal government changed the law in 1970, allowing for tribal elections of the Chief. Swimmer mentioned again the turmoil in the Tribe at the time, citing as examples the allegations of embezzlement in the Housing Authority; and, as a result, Chief Keeler having to fire the general manager. "Then [at the time] Keeler, himself, had been involved in the Nixon scandal, and had been accused of making illegal campaign

contributions – which he did – and he acknowledged this” (Swimmer interview, 2-23-2008).

Swimmer continued to explain that, due to these unfavorable circumstances surrounding Chief Keeler at the time, Chief Keeler was quite reluctant to publicly support Ross Swimmer to run as his successor on his platform. However, Swimmer told Keeler the only way he would enter the race was with Keeler’s public support. Ross Swimmer’s reasoning was that Keeler had devoted twenty-five years to the Tribe; and regardless of what he had done outside of the Tribe with his company, Swimmer knew Keeler’s heart was in the right place, as far as the Cherokee Nation was concerned (Swimmer interview, 2-23-2008).

When Neil Morton was asked in a telephone interview why W. W. Keeler chose Ross Swimmer as his successor, he shared his thoughts, after carefully considering the question. “Chiefs are going to have their own styles, and these styles will be determined by their personalities.” But, the personality reflects the product of the time period. Ross Swimmer was a very young person when Mr. Keeler asked him to run for Chief. But, he did have the tutelage of Mr. Keeler. Morton said, “They were like pioneers coming in and clearing the land, with the responsibility of conservation of the land they cleared.” Further, Morton continued, during the time of Keeler and Swimmer, governmental practices among tribes were non-existent. As Morton explained, these practices had to be created. In order to do so, Keeler and Swimmer had to come up with a constitution. They had to come up with a framework to make what they were going to do in the present and the future legal.

N. Morton elaborated,

You see, we didn't have to draw the constitution up. Keeler could have continued to serve as Chief without a new constitution. But, he chose not to run; and he chose during his administration to appoint the constitution convention and to grow for the future. But, he could have remained Chief. He would have had no trouble whatsoever being re-elected. So, he enabled what was to happen to happen. Ross, being a legal scholar, then was able to steer the tribe through the [writing of the] constitution – through the adoption of the constitution.

The Second Swimmer Myth (Changing a Rule)

The Cherokee Nation News (1975) featured a story of the indefinite postponement date for the filing period for the office of Principal Chief. W. W. Keeler's decision for the postponement was based on his belief that a tribal constitution was needed beforehand to give the Councilmen and Deputy Chief authority to act on behalf of the Tribe. Once the Constitution was approved, elections for Principal Chief could be held. Chief Keeler's thinking did not appear to slow candidate filings, as Ross Swimmer filed for the office, May 23, 1975 (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 21, p. 1). By June 27, 1975, nine candidates joined Ross Swimmer in filing for the race. The Election Committee posted an announcement in *The Cherokee Nation News* that the election would be held October 2, 1975, and gave instructions on how to request an absentee ballot. Following were the ten names on the slate of candidates:

1. Sam Drywater – Fullblood and fluent in the Cherokee language. High school education. Military service;
2. James Gordon – Former CEO of the Indian Health Service. 5/8th Cherokee. Military service;
3. Sam Hider – Served as elected representative of the Community Representatives. Director of Rural Indian education. Hider was a Reverend, and fullblood Cherokee;
4. J. D. Johnson – B.S. and M.S. degrees in education. Fullblood. Served in the military. Deputy Principal Chief, 1971-1972. Served on federal and state commissions;

5. Ralph Powell – Retired president of a life insurance company. Understands modern business management practices;
6. Charles Sanders – College educated fullblood minister. Mr. Sanders is bilingual and active in tribal affairs;
7. David Shell – Fullblood Cherokee. Educational background in communications. Currently with local radio station;
8. Ross Swimmer – Former General Counsel of the Cherokee Nation. One of two candidates living in Tahlequah. His primary campaign issues are: Education, health care, job development and tribal management. Swimmer has Chief Keeler's endorsement;
9. Butler Welch – College education and businessman. Mr. Welch belongs to many organizations, and is active in tribal affairs. He was honorably discharged from the navy;
10. George Wickliff – Fluent in Cherokee and more than ½ Cherokee. Mr. Wickliff is an educator holding a Master's degree (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 8 Number 26. June 27, 1975, p. 1).

Swimmer stated,

Then, the strangest thing happened, because some of the people in the Tribe – they began to take sides, of course. There had been nine candidates running since a year before. The Election Committee was made up of people who were either in Jim Gordon's corner or Butler Welch's corner. I don't know if there was anyone on the Commission who really would have supported me. They [the Election Committee] had changed the rules at the last minute and sent them to Keeler to sign. He was in Tennessee at the time [1974], trying to develop some gas wells. He signed them [the papers] without even looking, and sent them back. The committee had changed the age from 30 to 35, to be qualified to run for Chief. When Keeler came back to town, I said "Well, Bill, you just wrote me out of the race." He was astounded and said that was certainly not what was intended. He was the one who had the final say about it anyway, and he made them [Election Committee] change it back to the way it was. It had been thirty years of age, and this group amended it to thirty-five (Swimmer interview, March 23, 2008).

Swimmer admitted that Mr. Keeler's changing the rule back to the original was embarrassing, as this gave people reason to claim the rule was changed to benefit him.

The belief that Ross Swimmer was not eligible to run for Principal Chief due to his age has never been completely resolved to the satisfaction of many in the Cherokee Nation.

The age issue has emerged to become an ongoing second Swimmer myth. In Robertson's legal opinion,

Sam Drywater, defeated by Swimmer in the 1975 election, brought suit against Swimmer, arguing he did not meet the age requirement under the 1839 Constitution. According to legal scholar Dario Robertson (1998), the federal district court hearing the case, in an unpublished opinion, ruled incorrectly the 1839 Constitution was dead (*The Cherokee Observer, Inc.*, April 14, 1998. p. 7; <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/5918/apr/dario.html>.)

The September 6, 1839 Constitution of the Cherokee Nation states:

Article IV, Sec. 2. "No person except a natural born citizen shall be eligible to the office of Principal Chief; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained the age of thirty-five years" (The People's Paths home page. 1998, p. 5; <http://www.yvwiusdinvnohii.net/history/CherConst1839.htm>).

The 1976 Constitution of the Cherokee Nation. Tentative approval given by B. I. A. on 7-10-75. Modifications made 10-2-75. Approved by Chief Swimmer

Article VI, Sec. 2. The Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation shall be a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma in accordance with Article III. He shall have been born within boundaries of the United States of America, its territories or possessions; and he shall have obtained the age of thirty (30) years at the time of his election (Brice Downing, Jr., personal papers).

Swimmer was thirty-two years old when he announced his candidacy for Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Although the new 1976 Cherokee Constitution had been voted on and approved by the Cherokee people, it had not been signed off on by the Secretary of the Interior. Regardless, many traditional Cherokees did not agree with the replacement of the 1839 Cherokee Constitution. Many Cherokees today still consider the 1839 Constitution to be the legitimate Cherokee Constitution. Changing the Constitution's age qualification from thirty-five to thirty years of age to run for Principal Chief was viewed by many Cherokees as a change of the law (rule) to benefit Swimmer.

Campaigning for Office

A personal political campaign was a new experience for the Swimmers. Both Ross Swimmer and his wife Margaret were relative novices. The following section reports the memories of their insecurities, and speaks to the initial formation of Swimmer's intuitive vision of leadership.

Margaret Swimmer told the story of Ross coming home one evening and telling her he was going to run for the office of Principal Chief. She said it was okay with her. The next three evenings, after Chief Swimmer came home, he sat quietly and read the paper. Margaret remembered that, finally, on the third evening, she went to Ross and said, "If you are going to run, that's okay. But, if you are going to run, you are going to win."

Ross Swimmer was not sent to any special programs to study leadership or to learn how to be a Principal Chief of an Indian tribe. Margaret Swimmer explained that, at the time, the enrollment of Indian students in any college program was few in number. The number of Indian attorneys in the United States was small enough to be almost statistically insignificant. Margaret Swimmer believes Ross Swimmer was one of the first Indian attorneys to be a leader of his tribe. The few existing Indian attorneys were better off financially going to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs or any company looking to hire an Indian attorney.

According to Margaret Swimmer, the Swimmers did not know how to put a campaign together. Both admitted to being neophytes at any kind of political campaigning. Their political experience was limited to working for Republican Henry L.

Bellmon's campaigns (Governor of Oklahoma, 1963; Senator, 1968-1980; re-elected Governor, 1986). Basically, they considered themselves to be observers of the process and voters within it. The Swimmers worked their own campaign by "the seat of our pants."

Swimmer indicated he was uncomfortable asking for money. Fortunately, the 1975 race for Principal Chief wasn't expensive. Swimmer recalled that he and Margaret contributed five or six thousand dollars of their own money. Another "one or two thousand" came from small contributions. While these contributions were few, people did provide envelopes and money for the printing of brochures. But, the grinding elbow-work was done by volunteers. Homes and garages became the Swimmer campaign office, where envelopes were stuffed until the early morning hours. Bill Keeler contributed between one and two thousand dollars (Ross Swimmer, personal interview, 3-23-2008).

In Ross Swimmer's view, his employment with the Housing Authority became a positive to his campaign, as his work provided the opportunity to visit the outlying communities and introduce himself to the people. Coupled with his job as attorney for the Tribe, the numbers of people who came to know Ross Swimmer, and to support him, widened.

Swimmer admits to being disadvantaged by insecurity with public speaking. He would never make a speech unless it was written out and placed where he could read it. As the number of speeches increased, along with the increased number of hog-fries and pie suppers that both Margaret and Ross Swimmer attended, he realized he could not

write speeches any longer and made the first stump speech he ever made in his life. From then on, Ross never went back to writing speeches, and Margaret Swimmer would critique his deliveries. From her perspective, Swimmer's speeches improved.

As Swimmer revealed, however, his perception of himself as a public communicator remained a lingering problem. "I am often surprised at how my comments are received or perceived, and sometimes wonder if I am not able to communicate at all."

Margaret Swimmer indicated she was concerned and wanted to make certain her husband's message was understood by the people. From Swimmer's observations in the communities, he believed three areas of work needed immediate attention: (1) the Cherokee people needed increased access to health care, because they had to be healthy to learn; (2) tribal members needed to receive the education requisite to obtaining employment and improving their lives, and (3) they needed jobs.

Margaret Swimmer talked about her husband's vision for the building of the Cherokee Nation. A new Cherokee Constitution was his foremost campaign pledge. His leadership skills developed along a continuum with his ability to have facts presented to him, listen to people, and to seek out people who had more knowledge than he did. From these traits, he could envision an overall picture and then articulate a plan of action.

Swimmer was provided the opportunity to put his vision into practice. The Swimmers' political campaign efforts, underpinned by W. W. Keeler's public and private support for Swimmer's candidacy, yielded success. Ross Swimmer was elected to his first four-year term as Principal Chief of the Cherokee in 1975. This initial success was

followed by his second election in 1979. A third term to the office was granted to Swimmer in 1983.

Summary

Chapter IV begins with a discussion of two contextual landscapes. First, the location of the case study, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and its environment, is presented. Second, historical federal legislation and the work of two Cherokee Chiefs, Bartley Milam and W. W. Keeler, prior to the arrival of Ross O. Swimmer, are examined. Both the legislation and the two Cherokee leaders are important, as they affected with restraint and opportunity the leadership of Swimmer.

Ross Swimmer's profile is then presented, with brief discussions of his (1) early schooling; (2) college; (3) siblings; (4) mother and father; (5) Swimmer's thoughts on his Indian/White background; (6) lessons learned from a mentor, and (7) his first job.

Additionally, a snapshot of the governing structure of the Cherokee Tribe is presented in this chapter. Key descriptions are given to present a timely "feel" for the actual environment of Tahlequah, just prior to Swimmer's arrival as attorney for the Housing Authority. The differing cultural foundations co-existing in the populations of Tahlequah, the politics, local and federally implemented policies, and how they may or may not have influenced the perceived leadership characteristics of Ross Swimmer as Principal Chief, are discussed.

The year 1975 was another pivotal point for Cherokee survival. Elected Principal Chief in 1971, W. W. Keeler recognized the need for the Cherokee people to become modernized. The data indicate that Keeler placed the responsibility of the Tribe's future

into the hands of the young, legally trained Ross Swimmer; once again, the Cherokees could use the Anglo-European-American ways to build a governmental foundation well understood by Swimmer. However, Keeler left a powerful legacy resulting from his service as Chief-for-a-Day and as elected Principal Chief in 1971. Keeler is kindly remembered by the Cherokee people. As the interview participants shared freely their thoughts of Chief Keeler, the researcher chose to include their memories to fulfill one of the purposes of this study – to listen to the voices of the Cherokee people.

When W. W. Keeler passed the leadership mantle of the Cherokee Nation to Ross Swimmer in 1975, events began to move swiftly. Rumors swirled around Keeler and the young Swimmer, with the change of language in the Cherokee Constitution lowering the allowable age limit from thirty-five years of age to thirty to run for Principal Chief. After Swimmer filed for candidacy and received Keeler's endorsement, the Cherokee people concluded the Constitution was changed to benefit Ross Swimmer. This assumption damaged Swimmer's credibility. As a result, the second "Swimmer myth" emerged. The first Swimmer myth developed when Swimmer intermingled working for a local bank with working for the Cherokee Tribe.

Chapter V continues with an analysis of the data; findings that possibly impacted the direction of, or strengthened or weakened, Swimmer's leadership abilities and goals. The themes addressed are: (1) cultural influences; (2) leadership characteristics, and (3) accomplishments.

Chapter V

Findings

Cultural Environment, Leadership Characteristics, Comparative Analysis, and Accomplishments

My opinion is that the Cherokees will survive and will provide the leadership to prove to others that selfishness is, in fact, not the foundation of our civilization. (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Cherokee Column written by Ross O. Swimmer, Volume 9 Number 17, Friday April 23, 1976, p. 1).

Introduction

Chapter V presents findings generated during analysis of the collected interviews, documents and field note data. The research questions that guided this study include:

1. What were the leadership characteristics of Principal Chief Ross O. Swimmer?
2. To what extent did these leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics?
3. From a tribal perspective, did these make a difference: To what extent?

In order to address the questions, two categories of leadership characteristics are addressed. Emerging from the data are seven leadership characteristics utilized by Swimmer and identified as non-traditional leadership characteristics. The ten traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics found in the literature are placed in Category 2. As the data indicate, Swimmer's use of these traditional characteristics, acknowledgment is given.

The discussion of findings presented in this chapter is organized around emergent themes and sub-themes. The term *bricolage* is used to metaphorically weave together these themes and sub-themes into a pattern of identified leadership characteristics utilized by Ross Swimmer during his tenure as Principal Chief. With bricolage as a lens, three major themes are featured to address the study's questions: (1) cultural influences; (2) leadership characteristics [both non-traditional and traditional], and (3) Swimmer's accomplishments are examined. Additional, multiple sub-themes within each theme are identified and explored.

Highlights of Swimmer's first, second and third terms are discussed. *The Cherokee Columns*, written by Swimmer and used as a communications tool, are featured. The Cherokee Nation's foundational building brick, the 1976 Swimmer Constitution, is a major highlight. Swimmer's belief in the importance of Cherokee community self-sufficiency is illuminated by the Bell Community self-help project, which received national attention. Swimmer's diagnosis of cancer and how the personally startling news affected his decision to run for a third term as Principal Chief help to integrate the pieces of fabric comprising an overarching view of Swimmer's leadership.

Cultural Influences

W. W. Keeler asked Ross O. Swimmer to come to work for the Cherokee Housing Authority in the early 1970s, as the Authority's attorney. Swimmer made the decision to do so. At the time, Keeler was the leader and Chief of the Cherokees. The data suggest Swimmer gave no consideration to refusing Keeler. A comment by

Chapman (interview participant) is presented later in Chapter V, in reference to Swimmer accepting the position to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs. According to Chapman, it never entered Swimmer's mind to refuse the request of President Reagan. The data indicate that, when Swimmer was called upon for public service, Swimmer accepted, without question, public servant responsibility.

The Cherokee culture Swimmer stepped into did not trust Whites. Wahrahaftig (1975) cites Debo (1940), as Cherokee distrust of "lawyer, judges, bankers, written documents, officials of the State of Oklahoma, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs" (Wahrahaftig, p. 33). Debo's research findings are "based on solid historical precedent" (p. 33). Once a prosperous people, the Cherokee, post-Oklahoma statehood, were extremely poor, eking out a living on sub-marginal land; "A large and culturally conservative Cherokee population . . . gone relatively unnoticed, especially as viewed from a national perspective" (Wahrahaftig, p. 16). However, where full-blood communities were found intact, they were surviving; conservative in their worldview, poor, "but not yet demoralized nor alcoholic" (Wahrahaftig, p. 31). According to Buchanan (1972), "Economic deprivation combined with physical isolation have worked to keep the Cherokee community structure largely intact" (p. 33). This group of full-blood Cherokees, Wahrahaftig theorized to be the cultural descendants of the first pre-Removal Principal Chief of the Cherokees, John Ross (Wahrahaftig, p. 50; Baldwin, 1985).

A second group of Cherokees, eventually to be known as the Treaty Party, split from John Ross's party by agreeing to the federal government demands of Removal.

This population of Cherokees intermarried with Whites. During the time period of interest to this study, “They have become socially and culturally assimilated Americans who are ‘proud of their Cherokee ancestry’” (Wahrahaftig, p. 50). According to Wahrahaftig, the full-blood Cherokee population were culturally Cherokee; the assimilated Cherokee, by their ability to trace ancestry to the Dawes Roll, were legally Cherokee. Before Swimmer’s arrival, the legal Cherokees joined with White businessmen “and administrators” to form a Cherokee establishment “that has emerged to direct the affairs of the whole region. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, the official government of the Cherokee Tribe, is the seat of this regional establishment” (Wahrahaftig, 1972, p. 52)

According to Buchanan (1985), “Today’s Cherokee appear to be a separate people; one group attempting to maintain their traditional relationships to the environment and community, and another group who have become historically part of the Oklahoma dominant cultural scene, and actively administering the tribal trust and the programs which serve the tribal needs” (pp. 75-76).

Wahrahaftig maintains the Cherokee Nation is a “legal entity and a political unit...a plural society within a plural society” (p. 64). Further, Wahrahaftig states: “The Cherokee Nation is made up of an elite who must maintain their credibility as Indians in the view of members of the surrounding society in order to qualify to govern a population of culturally Indian people who regard these administrators as white men” (pp. 64-65). According to Wahrahaftig (1975), the power to control the plural populations co-existing

in Tahlequah was key to maintaining economic and political power. According to Castile (2006),

Colonization and the processes of assimilation are not yet finished with Indian peoples. Even as we seek new ways to embrace ourselves as Indian communities, the colonizer has found new ways to impede Indian healing and to steal what is left of Indian identity, cultural values, and traditional lifeways (p. 228).

Based on the data available, the researcher was unable to ascertain if Swimmer was even aware of multiple cultures co-existing in the Tahlequah area at the time of his arrival. Perhaps this lack of awareness on Swimmer's part was due to the common recognition by many Cherokees defining Swimmer as an outsider. Historically, Cherokee leaders had been traditionally selected by community consensus (Allen, interview participant; AIPC, 2002). Although Keeler was one-quarter-blood Cherokee, Keeler was considered by several of the interview participants as culturally Cherokee. As this comment was absent in reference to Swimmer, he is regarded as the first non-traditional Chief of the modern Cherokee Nation.

Ross O. Swimmer's First Term (1975-1979)

Ross Swimmer, a quarter-blood Cherokee, the youngest of ten candidates, won the race for Principal Chief. "In the Chief-Elect's former stated plans, he will continue in the office of president of the First National Bank, but will also spend time at the tribal office. He will draw the Chief's annual salary, \$6,500" (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8 Number 32, August 8, 1975, p. 1). The final tally, including absentee ballots, was 8,120 votes cast. Ross Swimmer won with 2,253 votes in the 1975 election. No runoff occurred. The winner was determined by a plurality of the vote (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8 Number 32, August 8, 1975, p. 1; Swimmer interview).

Chart of the 1975 Vote Count

CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA
ELECTION OF PRINCIPAL CHIEF

Final Tally Sheet

on of Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation or Tribe of Oklahoma, held on the 2nd day of August, 1975, in the 14 county precincts of the Old Cherokee
and by Absentee Ballot.

	TOTAL COUNTY	ADAIR COUNTY	CHEROKEE COUNTY	CRAIG COUNTY	DELAWARE COUNTY	HAYES COUNTY	MCINTOSH COUNTY	MUSKOGEE COUNTY	NOWATA COUNTY	OTTAWA COUNTY	ROGERS COUNTY	SEQUOYAH COUNTY	TULSA COUNTY	WAGONER COUNTY	WASHINGTON COUNTY	ABSENTEE BALLOTS	TOTAL
R, Ross O.	1309	125	254	69	52	80	15	132	36	31	126	102	139	15	133	944	2253
FF, George	144	16	9	3	41	40	0	0	2	0	26	3	3	0	1	29	173
San	775	237	92	27	187	94	1	13	4	12	21	30	37	8	12	123	898
David	88	33	42	1	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	15	103
J, James	1357	406	164	12	361	106	1	36	4	5	19	162	59	5	17	265	1622
ER, Sam, Jr.	86	4	21	1	4	21	0	5	2	1	4	0	19	0	4	34	120
C, J. D.	145	36	22	1	28	6	0	3	2	0	5	23	5	8	6	334	479
S, Charles	29	7	2	2	1	0	0	4	0	0	2	5	4	2	0	19	48
Butler	1107	58	209	64	207	124	2	20	20	15	68	83	167	9	61	868	1975
R, Ralph	344	10	16	42	76	11	2	17	10	89	15	5	33	3	15	105	449
	5384	932	831	222	959	487	21	230	80	153	286	416	467	51	249	2736	8120

Chart of the 1975 Vote Count
The Cherokee Nation News, Volume 8, Number 32, August 8, 1975

The rudimentary chart showing the 1975 vote count electing Ross Swimmer as Principal Chief is noteworthy, as it provides an interesting contrast with Swimmer's insistence on computerization as he begins to modernize the Cherokee Nation.

In Swimmer's acceptance speech, he outlined his governing plans:

1. Organization changes in the structure of the Tribe's line of authority;
2. The Tribe will be directed by a 15-man Council or Cabinet;
3. Daily contact will be made with a business director (Vance McSpadden), a program director, who will manage federally funded social services (Gary Dean

Chapman) and a person representing the interests of individual Cherokees (undecided);

4. An investment committee chosen from members of the Council will make business decisions;
5. Bi-lingual people will be placed at the bank and the tribal office;
6. Establish a permanent Election Board;
7. Establish a merit system for Tribal employees;
8. Acquire a new hospital;
9. Establish more scholarship funds for Cherokee youths;
10. Regularly visit with Cherokee communities in the fourteen counties;
11. Establish an “Indian Senate” of Oklahoma and Kansas tribal leaders
(*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 8 Number 32. August 8, 1975. p. 1)

According to Swimmer, he became Chief of the Cherokees with the mission of leading and rebuilding an Indian Nation having essentially no independent income. Having some revenue from the judgment funds and the passage of the seminal Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 1-14-1975, the Tribe sat on the edge of promise – if the Tribe had good leadership. Chief Ross Swimmer began his first term with about “seven or eight million dollars” in the bank.

In discussing his beginning thoughts after his election as Chief, Ross Swimmer believed he had an advantage. Leadership was not instinctive but rather was learned – intuitive. Based on his college education in law, he viewed leadership as putting into place a typical hierarchical organization. According to Drucker (2006), leadership can be learned.

The Third Swimmer Myth (Spending Time at the Bank Instead of Working for the Cherokee People)

Swimmer indicated that, in 1975, at the start of his first term, he pledged himself to a personal challenge. He had to prove to the people they made the right choice in electing him as their Principal Chief. “I only won twenty-nine percent of the vote and I

swear to you, from the time of that election until 1979, I was out of the house, in the community, three or four nights a week and on the weekends. We went to every festival, we went to every school. I even gave a graduation speech to the kindergarten class in Kenwood [a Cherokee community].”

However, among the people, the prominent belief existed that Ross Swimmer was never seen in the communities and rarely at his Tribal office. He was always at the bank. Swimmer refutes this myth. His memory is that deciding Tribal business took precedence over bank business. Margaret Swimmer told two stories that substantiate Swimmer’s memory of community work during his first term in office.

One Friday night he came home – our boys were still fairly young – we were both tired and he said, “You know, so and so came in today and they’ve got this new home they’ve just built and they are so proud of it. Their ten-year old twins are having their birthday party tonight and they want us to come over. We piled in the car and we drove to Adair County for the birthday party on Friday night.

One time we were visiting a lady and she was complaining because she had a leak under her sink and no one would come and fix it for her. Ross told her that he would. He went in, changed the washer, and spent a lot of time with her. Many of the half-bloods and full-bloods [in the communities] were really big supporters of Ross’s. At the stomp grounds, William [Smith] always introduced him. He would say, “I’m the spiritual Chief, but this is our political Chief.” They were very supportive.

According to N. Morton, Swimmer’s work with the bank “really did not interfere with conducting business with the Cherokee Nation. During the time he was Chief, in my opinion, Swimmer didn’t serve a major role in the bank [although he was President] and was just as accessible to the citizenry [Cherokee] as he was the bank. When I would go to the bank, there was always a line of people waiting to see him on tribal business.

The myth should be the other way around. He worked more for the Tribe than for the bank.”

Whether the three Swimmer prevailing stories are truly myths, or misunderstanding on the part of Swimmer, is not clear. However, Swimmer perceives the stories as myths and describes them as propaganda. As previously noted, the three tales have persisted over time. A comment by Patsy E. Morton adds an interesting layer to the imagery of the stories. “Although his dad taught him a lot, Swimmer never understood the traditional way of thinking, although he tried. The men would tease him in the traditional way and he didn’t understand that” (Morton, P.E., interview participant). According to Deloria (1988), “Teasing was a method of control of social situations by Indian people. Rather than embarrass members of the Tribe publicly, people used to tease individuals they considered out of step with the consensus of tribal opinion (Deloria, 1988, p. 147).

Swimmer Starts to Build the Cherokee Nation’s Foundation

Swimmer shared that, after his election as Chief of the Cherokee Nation, he was intent on trying to bring the town and the University together with the Cherokee Tribe to help build its foundation – not just in Tahlequah, but, in Cherokee County, Adair County, Sequoyah County, and Delaware County. Swimmer’s goal was to improve education and health and create jobs, aspects which he believed would be mutually beneficial to all three entities.

Shortly after taking office, Swimmer was able to test his partnership philosophy and networking skills by working out a deal which solved problems for Northeastern

State University and the Cherokee Nation simultaneously. At the same time the Nation had received designation as a two-year Job Corps site from the Department of Labor for training programs, the University ran into difficulties filling their dorms. Swimmer was able to lease dorm space. Federal money was paid for use of the dormitories as a residential site. The actual training was held at the Tribal location. For two years, the Cherokee Nation was able to help the University survive serious financial problems. “After moving from the dorms, the Nation was financially able to build a facility next to the tribal complex, which is now a state-of-the-art facility for the Job Corps Center.”

Don Vaughn stated in an interview, “I think Chief Swimmer was very much an important part of laying the foundation for the future growth of the Cherokee Nation. When I started to work for the Tribe, the Constitution was just barely five years old. Centralized structure had begun to develop. I would assume Chief Swimmer was very instrumental in that.” Lemont agrees: “Ross Swimmer played a large role in helping to construct the Nation’s modern government” (Lemont, E., 2001, p. 6). According to Vaughan, Swimmer put into place a centralized financial system, a centralized acquisition management system, and a centralized human resource system.

Vaughn added,

In terms of his leadership style, I generally felt like Ross Swimmer had a vision of where the Cherokee Nation needed to go without a lot of the essential mechanics, or the wheels in place to make some of that development actually occur. I would see his administration as being very much a building block. It was like a built vehicle, but the engine had not been fully developed. The employment of the Cherokee Nation was much smaller. The Nation was more dependent on federal funding sources. But, it became more attractive as a recipient of federal money because those basic systems were put in place. I believe he was a very important part in the governmental structure that is here today.

Vaughn continued to explain that the successful implementation of Swimmer's corporate model spawned the continued growth of the Cherokee Nation. Vaughan, however, did not view Chief Swimmer as a micromanager. Rather, Mr. Vaughan thought the Chief made a deliberate attempt to let people do their jobs and not interfere. From Mr. Vaughn's perspective, he felt Chief Swimmer's mindset was to build a Cherokee Nation with individual companies in place that would create a more independent, self-sufficient Cherokee Nation; a Cherokee Nation less dependent on federal sources of income.

From Neil Morton's perspective, rather than micromanage employees, Ross Swimmer depended on "lieutenants" to handle certain things. Morton, an interview participant, stated:

One of Ross's strengths was his ability to get things done through his lieutenant system. In my opinion, at times, he was a poor judge of strengths and weaknesses of people he'd given responsibility to. But, his strength was being able to get a global perspective of the Tribe from the vantage of a mountain top. But, he didn't come off the mountain top.

During Chief Swimmer's first term, the federal government restricted the Nation on how the funds they received could be allocated. The monies were to be used exactly in the manner prescribed by contract. These funds, earmarked for restricted purposes by federal agencies, such as, Indian Health and the Department of Interior, were a negative for Chief Swimmer in terms of being able to get some things done. According to Swimmer, "The way the federal government would work is, if you got a grant, you had to finance the project before you got your money. And, you might not get the money from

the government for a month or two, and then they would always run a couple of weeks behind.”

Don Vaughn continued to explain that he believed the structure Ross Swimmer put into place, out of necessity, became more Anglo-directed. The increased regulatory issues and the bureaucratic nature of our society demand an organization or government to operate within defined structures and certain confines. Mr. Vaughn thought Swimmer’s foundational plan for the Cherokee Nation might possibly have been in conflict with the Cherokee traditional mindset that believed bureaucracy was not necessarily needed. Written contracts and legal advice were not always necessary.

Vaughn continued:

But, I think the end result, if you don’t have those things, you suddenly wind up with chaos within the organization and things get out of control. Then you have problems with the federal government and the parties you deal with in society in general. The end result is this might hamper the traditional mindset to some degree. I think a certain amount of bureaucracy and a certain amount of the general mindset about business in our society has to be adopted to some degree by the Cherokee Nation in order to function and in order to continue growth. You can’t live in isolation. You have to adjust to your environment to some degree. And, I think the Cherokees have been pretty good at doing that. It’s recognizing the realities of where you are.

David Cornsilk, during his interview, offered a different perspective. He (Cornsilk) looked to the full-bloods, the traditionalists, the Cherokee Baptist churches, and the viewpoints found in their communities of consensus – respect and inclusion – as who Cherokees were and should be. He viewed Ross Swimmer’s corporate culture as a top-heavy inverted pyramid (weighed by power). The corporate culture model was not a bottom-up government, and the person at the top held too much power. Mr. Cornsilk remarked that Cherokees have sacrificed who we are for the sake of a “Euro-American

model” of corporate government. He is not sure all of the money is worth the loss of identity.

Cornsilk further stated:

You know, we probably would have gone about it [building a foundation] in a much more slow and deliberate way. Who is to say in that slow and deliberate way we might not have come up with a better idea? We will never know because the model Ross created in the 1976 Constitution, and his form of dominant, executive authority, doesn’t allow for that kind of Cherokee participation.

From Cornsilk’s perspective, Ross Swimmer was an impatient thirty-year-old who was ready to build an organizational foundation for a Cherokee government in hiatus from 1906 to 1970, and was self-admittedly not a good communicator. Swimmer recognized he was not a natural “people person.”

David Cornsilk thought Chief Swimmer misunderstood how people (the traditional Cherokee) perceived him. Cornsilk stated, “Yes, he did good things. But, how he went about them . . . from listening to some of the full-bloods [Cornsilk listening] . . . it was perceived Ross treated people in a condescending way.”

The 1976 “Swimmer” Constitution

In early 1975, Swimmer’s immediate focus and short-tem goal was tribal organization. According to Swimmer, “The Tribe still did not have a lot of influence. A government organization needed to be created. The lack of money was a crucial weakness. Back then, we were scratching for every dime we could get.” Although the Tribe was limping along with monies from Indian Health Service, education grants from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and welfare grants awarded by the BIA to individual Cherokees below a certain income level, the Tribe was stymied in growth by the lack of a

constitution. “One of the things the BIA told us – and insisted on – was, ‘if you don’t have a constitutional form of government, we are not going to be able to provide services to you as a Tribe.’” By adopting a constitution, Swimmer could see federal funds increasing to the Tribe; monies which would provide a means for and impetus to organizing the Cherokee government.

According to Swimmer, W. W. Keeler formed a Cherokee Constitutional Committee to work on a new governing document in the late 1960s. After ten years of drafts, the committee had made no progress. Since one of Ross Swimmer’s campaign promises was the completion of a constitution, after his election, “A group of us got together, went through all of the documents [Keeler’s committee], and wrote a constitution. It wasn’t changed much except in governance.”

Swimmer further indicated he based the new constitution on a corporate model. The primary change from the 1839 Constitution was the change from a bicameral legislature to a Council of fifteen people. Under the 1839 Cherokee Constitution, legislative power was vested in two distinct branches of government – a National Committee and a National Council. The National Committee consisted of two members from each District, and the National Council of three members from each District. Swimmer believed this governmental structure was too unwieldy and was “not useful for the quick receipt and disbursement of federal funds” (Lemont, 2001, p. 7). Swimmer’s preference for a unicameral, corporate form of government was based on his reasoning that the bicameral legislature would translate into “Sixty or 75 people in the government of the tribe . . . I thought we’d never get anything done” (Lemont, 2001, p. 7).

Swimmer stated:

Keeler's final proposed constitution had an upper and lower house with about sixty people making up what they called a Senate. I mean you would never get anything done. I couldn't see paying for the cost of convening all those folks periodically. So, one of the things I insisted on was just having a smaller Council – a tribal Council – a legislative body. You would have an executive body; a Deputy Chief for a succession role. If Keeler had died, the BIA would have come in and run the Tribe until another Chief was appointed. Then we needed a court. So, we agreed on a tribunal. Three people appointed by the Chief and confirmed by the Council.

From David Cornsilk's perception, "Ross Swimmer created a corporate model that did not take into consideration the Cherokee communities, the Cherokee thinking, or the Cherokee culture. All it took into consideration was the goal of achieving the goal of creating jobs, money and opportunity. But, opportunity is only as good as the people's ability to access it. And, if people don't have the ability to access it because of their cultural view, their way of life, the model is not working."

David Cornsilk, as a fourteen-year-old, was present during a 1975 meeting where Chief Swimmer argued his position on creating a new constitution that did not have a bicameral legislature. Mr. Cornsilk remembers very clearly Ross Swimmer's opposition to a bicameral model. "I can still hear the words ringing in my ears – 'I will never get anything done!'"

Cornsilk elaborated,

To watch him [Ross Swimmer] talk to Sam Hider, a full-blood, not comfortable in speaking English, and Sam opposed to the constitution, Ross brought him to a place where he could hold that opposition view but not be verbal about it; and not by intimidating him, but just by simply explaining to him – give me a chance – give me a shot and let me show you what this can do. I think that's a very Cherokee kind of thing, to give someone the benefit of the doubt. You may not necessarily agree with them, but if it doesn't look like something that's going to be directly harmful, Cherokees will tend to give you the benefit of the doubt and

give you enough rope to hang yourself. To basically make people lay down for you when they were opposed to what you wanted, from a fourteen-year-old perspective, I was impressed. I'm not sure that's a leadership quality or just a lawyer kind of thing. But, he sure was a good talker. After the summer of 1975, I had no contact with him again until 1983.

Ross Swimmer added, the Swimmer Constitution was approved "so, Keeler and I took it to Washington, to be signed, and I think it was Secretary Kleppe who signed and approved. We put a provision in that required the Secretary of Interior's signature in order to amend or replace the Constitution. I am often asked why. One, we were not aware of any authority we had to adopt a constitution because the 1906 Act was still in effect."

Swimmer continued, when a Council was elected by the people, replacing Swimmer's interim appointed Council, Chief Swimmer wound up with "probably nine or ten people who were pretty much in agreement with where I wanted to go, and there were probably four or five other who were very antagonistic." Although Ross Swimmer's intentions were to create an organization efficiently delivering services to the Cherokee people, and not to deliberately set up a government, the foundation of a Cherokee government was the result of the Swimmer Constitution (Lemont, 2001).

An additional purpose of a Cherokee Constitution was to eliminate a "one-man-rule" and move toward a more democratic form of governing. Swimmer believed it was important to prepare for an orderly succession of leadership in the event of the death of the current Chief. Without Swimmer's insistence on having a Tribal Council, a Deputy Chief and a Tribal Court, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would move to govern the Tribe in the event of a leadership vacuum.

Orderly succession of Cherokee leadership was put in place under the rules of the new constitution. However, the Cherokee Constitution was Swimmer's constitution, and became known as the "1976 Swimmer Constitution." Lemont (2001, p. 24) quotes Swimmer from an Address at John F. Kennedy School of Government Symposium on American Indian Constitutional and Governmental Reform (April 2, 2002), indicating that Swimmer bypassed community participative input to accommodate expediency.

I had some opposition, and people said, well, it's not ready yet; you can't do this, one thing after another. I went ahead and took it to the Bureau of Indian Affairs; we got them to sign off on it; and in 1976, we took it to a vote and it was overwhelmingly adopted. I don't think the people had a clue as to what they were voting on. They accepted that we needed something (Ross Swimmer, Address at John F. Kennedy School of Government Symposium on American Indian Constitutional and Governmental Reform, April 2, 2001; transcript on file with Eric Lemont).

Lemont stated: "From the mid-1970s through the mid-1990s, the Nation [Cherokee] prospered under its 1976 Constitution, and enjoyed a reputation as one of the most stable and autonomous Nations in Indian Country" (Lemont, 2001, p. 8).

The Cherokee Columns (Written by Ross O. Swimmer, Principal Chief)

Swimmer implemented his vision for the Cherokee Nation and his campaign commitments to the Cherokee people by communicating, weekly, to the Cherokee people through *Cherokee Columns* published in *The Cherokee Nation News*. *Cherokee Voices*, a second newsletter, funded in part by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare office of Native American Programs [HUD], supplemented Swimmer's communication effort with its start date publication, May 1976. The first *Cherokee Column* was published January 23, 1975 (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9 Number 4, January 23, 1975, p. 1).

Swimmer indicated the topics featured were current issues affecting and impacting the Cherokee people. Swimmer's seeming desire to educate the people, his apparent willingness to present a transparent administration, his attempts to unite the Cherokee people with up-front explanations about conditions and issues facing the Nation, present clues to Swimmer's leadership characteristics. Swimmer believed the first order of business for the Cherokee people was to have a new constitution.

Swimmer stated, in his *Cherokee Column*, January 30, 1976,

Why have a constitution? This question has been raised by many Cherokees . . . any organization, whether it be a corporation, partnership, city, state or the governing body of a nation, must have a set of principles creating a framework within which to work. Otherwise, the organization will have uncontrolled growth in directions never contemplated, or become stagnant for lack of direction (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9 Number 5, January 30, 1976, p. 1).

From his perspective, choosing to use the tool of words, Swimmer campaigned weekly, lobbied, and explained to the Cherokee people the rapid changes creating opportunity for the Cherokee Nation and the alterations occurring in their lives caused, in part, by changes in federal policy. Behind the energetic push for innovation was a newly elected, young Principal Chief, cautious but anxious to secure implementation of the historic opportunities.

Explaining Public Law 93-638 (the Indian Determination and Education Assistance Act), Swimmer stated,

The law simply allows for Indian tribes so desiring to assume the operation of federal programs [previously administered by the BIA]. My initial opinion is not to jump into something this new until the rules and regulations have been fully tested. Also, because of the disarray of the Cherokees' business and programs I encountered upon taking the office of Chief, I certainly am not anxious for the Tribe to begin new ventures until we have a solid foundation from which to work (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9, Number 6, February 6, 1976, p. 1).

Swimmer continued throughout his first year as Principal Chief publicly addressing important issues with attempts to inform and explain, thereby alleviating fear and tamping down hearsay within the Tribe. Swimmer's communication seemed modulated, with a consistent tone of earnestness mixed with a sense of urgency.

Swimmer explained his reasons for revamping the Tribal registration process in order to include all people who "think they are members of the Tribe, and not lose our Tribal identity." Swimmer discussed his plans for a better health care system for Cherokees. To dispel disinformation, the Distribution of the Judgment Funds was explained in more than one column. The Arkansas River case received regular attention, as did answering frequently asked questions, such as, "What is the Role of the Cherokee Nation," and "What is the Tribal Role?" Swimmer continually reminded the people of their history, the importance of retaining their language, and the need for improving their level of education (*The Cherokee Nation News*, January, 1976-May, 1976).

The *Cherokee Voices* announced the passage of the Constitution by an overwhelming margin. "6,028 votes in favor of passage as opposed to 785 votes cast against its adoption." Swimmer had fulfilled his first campaign pledge to the Cherokee people in the first six months of his administration (*Cherokee Voices*, Volume One, Number Two, June/July 1976, p. 1).

Swimmer's forthrightness, through the *Cherokee Columns*, continued through the remainder of his first year in office. Swimmer expressed his consciousness of the present fragility of the Cherokee Tribe, and his recognition the Cherokees faced an insecure future. Swimmer stated,

Too many of our tribesmen are looking for an easy way out without realizing how easy it is to be let down. Right now the American people, through the federal government, are trying to settle their grievance with the Indians. But suppose the government says one day that it has paid the price for the broken treaties and promises and that no more funds will be appropriated for Indian relief. At that point, tribesmen must look back to how well their leaders planned for that day. Some tribes will survive and will continue to be a representative for its people. I am afraid the vast majority will disappear because their tribal government failed to plan and failed to work toward self-sufficiency (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 9 Number 28, July 9, 1976, p. 1).

According to Swimmer, he did not hesitate to publicly discuss his past business mistakes. However, Swimmer did not accept a defeatist attitude; instead, he chose to rally behind the native ability of the Cherokee to accept errors, learn from them, and apply these lessons to begin anew. Swimmer shared with the Cherokee people the out-of-town trips he made for the purpose of Tribal business. He explained each new policy as it was developed and implemented. New program hires were introduced to the Tribe. Involvement in Tribal affairs by parents and individual community members was encouraged.

Swimmer stated,

Once again, it is time for the Cherokee people to come together in peace and harmony for the benefit of the whole Tribe. Cherokees all over the United States are looking toward Tahlequah this year to see whether the Cherokees will stand together once again and work for the common good (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 9 Number 35, August 27, 1976, p. 1).

As forthrightly as Swimmer admitted his mistakes, he was equally able to discuss, in his Cherokee Column, the initial personal hostility he encountered. Swimmer stated,

August 2, 1975, was a fateful day for the Cherokees. They just elected a new Chief after twenty-six years of leadership by W. W. Keeler. I remember the early morning of the third, when the announcement was made. Many people turned away refusing to hear what I had to say. Many still refuse today. But the Tribe has endured, as have I. I knew at the time that the job would be difficult, but

emotionally rewarding. The atmosphere around the Tribe was somewhat hostile at first, but I found willing workers and volunteers everywhere (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 9 Number 32, August 6, 1976, p. 1).

With the new Constitution in place, the next order of business for the Tribe was the election of a Council and Deputy Chief. A second campaign and voting process was initiated. In November 1976, the Cherokee Nation was operating under a democratic form of government. Richard Perry Wheeler, Mayor of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, was elected Deputy Chief. A Council of fifteen men and one woman was elected and first called into session Saturday, December 4, 1976. Swimmer remembered thinking their most important decision would be whether the Cherokee Nation would survive.

With the election of the Council and Deputy Chief, Swimmer reassessed his position as Principal Chief. Swimmer stated,

In the past, the decision of survival has been left to one person, the Principal Chief. Now it is a decision the Council will make at every meeting it holds. I am confident that the present Council will do everything in its power to keep the Cherokee Nation alive; but to be sure future councils follow the same course, we must plan 20-30 years in the future.

My function as Chief has been greatly modified. This is no surprise. I realized that changing from a one-man government to a democracy would result in substantial diminution of power and authority. I also believe it was best for the Cherokee Nation, and the people responded by enacting the Constitution. My job description is now reasonably simple. As Chief, I must execute the laws and regulations the Council enacts. I am responsible for running the Tribe in accordance with the directives from the Council. But I am allowed to hire a staff of people to work toward the goals set by the Council and to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Tribal government. The Council must respond to the people as much or more than I have this past year (*The Cherokee Nation News*, June, 1976-December, 1976).

Swimmer admitted, in a late 1976 *Cherokee Column*, that it might have appeared he pushed the Cherokees “too hard and too fast” during his first year in office. Swimmer believed he had no other choice other than to “do things quickly,” as the federal

government was recognizing Indian tribes as “sovereign units of government,” strengthening a federal policy of self-determination, and re-organizing the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Swimmer made the decision to have the Cherokee Nation prepared to assume responsibility for themselves as these new federal policies were unfolding.

In contrast to Swimmer’s measured “voice” used in the *Cherokee Columns*, occasionally, Swimmer exhibited frustration in these writings by the distinct tone of a lecture. Swimmer’s infrequent sermonizing appeared to center around his antipathy toward “many people, including some Cherokees . . . regarding the Cherokee Nation simply as a tool for dispensing federal monies [to individuals] . . . We need leaders who are committed because they care what happens [to the Cherokee Nation] and not people who are just along for the ride” (*The Cherokee Nation News, Cherokee Column*, Volume 9, Number 42, October 15, 1976, p. 1).

For conservation of money and perceived communication effectiveness, a decision was made at the end of Swimmer’s first four years of office to merge *The Cherokee Nation News* and *The Cherokee Voices* into a single newspaper, the *Cherokee Advocate*. The name, *Cherokee Advocate*, was reclaimed from the original 1844 Cherokee Nation’s newspaper (*Cherokee Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February, 1977, p. 1). The *Cherokee Columns* would come to be infrequently written, as Swimmer came to spend more time in Washington, D. C., during his second term as leader of the Cherokees.

Ross O. Swimmer's Second Term (1979-1983)

Ross Swimmer announced he would seek a second term as Principal Chief in the upcoming June 1979 Tribal election (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume II Issue 12, January 1979, p. 1). During the first four years of Swimmer's administration, the list of accomplishments under his leadership yielded the following:

1. Three hundred employees managing Tribal assets of \$22 million dollars;
2. An accounting system yearly audited by an independent certified public accounting firm;
3. The new industries, Facet in Stillwell [Oklahoma], Haeger Pottery in Tahlequah, and Wood Ventures in Kenwood, were additive to the local economy;
4. One million dollars paid to the elderly due to claims recovery;
5. A settlement to the Arkansas Riverbed claim could bring additional money to the Tribe;
6. Youth-work programs, Headstart and pre-school activities were extended. Juvenile delinquency and drop-out programs were initiated. A program for the elderly to become more involved in their communities was developed;
7. Improvement of Tribal land, which is returning some income to the Tribe. Acquisition of new land;
8. The Capital building and jail will be returned to the Cherokee Nation. Preservation and restoration of the historic buildings will begin;
9. Work on the new Hastings Indian Hospital is in process;
10. Passage of a new Constitution;

11. Election of a Council and Deputy Chief;

12. New housing.

Swimmer further stated, “Such changes have brought the Cherokee Nation to a leadership position among Indian tribes” (Letter to the Cherokees, *Cherokee Advocate*, January 1979, p. 3; p. 14). Swimmer continued,

The Cherokees must provide the leadership that is so desperately needed to Indian country today . . . The Cherokees can certainly be considered the leaders in their form of government among the tribes in Oklahoma. Already several tribes have requested copies of the Cherokee Constitution to use as models for potential reorganizations. The Constitution is not perfect, but it is a good framework to begin operations (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Cherokee Column, Volume 9, Number 47, November 19, 1976, p. 1).

Swimmer quickly encountered a difference between his 1979 and 1975 campaigns for Principal Chief. Simply, campaigning was more expensive. The need to raise capital, as opposed to paying for expenses out-of-pocket, became a reality. In part, this circumstance was due to the increased number of registered Cherokees in the fourteen-county area of the Cherokee Nation, along with the absentee voters spread across the United States.

Swimmer further explained,

By '79, a lot of the people in the counties were voting absentee or by mail. But, I generally did win that share of the vote. But, we went out and held these hog-fries [a traditional event, equated to the white culture's traditional barbeque supper for a political candidate; the meal is prepared by men and will feed several hundred people], and went to pie suppers and every venue we could get to. It was a more expensive election. Council member ran as a team and put in \$1,000 toward the printing of material because, by that time, '79, we all ran as a group, even though you didn't have to.

Swimmer faced four challengers for his second term run for Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. His schedule was filled with campaigning for Principal Chief,

managing the daily business of the Tribe in accordance with the laws and regulations enacted by the Council, and shuttling back and forth between Tahlequah and Washington, D.C., representing the interests of the Cherokee Nation. Sensing the need to take advantage of President Jimmy Carter's favorable policy toward Native Americans, Swimmer testified before a Senate appropriations subcommittee hearing in early March 1979, on the pending settlement of the Riverbed suit, and "on the proposed W. W. Hastings replacement hospital project" (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume III, Issue I, February 1979). During this time, Swimmer retained his position as bank president, not leaving the bank until 1984.

Swimmer stated, "It is true [however] that the majority of my time was tribal business during the eleven years we were in Tahlequah. There were a lot of 16- and 18-hour days." Swimmer provided insight to explain his intense work ethic:

I've got to prove to the people they made the right decision. I only won twenty-nine percent of the vote [in 1975], and I swear to you, from the time of that election until 1979, I was out of the house, in the community three or four nights a week and on weekends. In 1979, I started working very hard on claim settlements, and spent a lot of time in Washington, D. C.

Ross Swimmer was re-elected to the office of Principal Chief on June 16, 1979, by nearly 67% of the vote. Swimmer viewed the show of strong support as "a mandate from the people to carry on with the present programs and goals of tribal administration" (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume III, Issue 5, June 1979, p. 1). After a run-off, Perry Wheeler was re-elected as Deputy Chief. Clarifying a misunderstanding among the Cherokee people about the role of the Deputy Chief, Swimmer explained, "The job of the

Deputy Chief is simple – act at my direction, and conduct council meetings” (*Cherokee Advocate*, Letter To the Cherokees, June 1979, p. 3).

Swimmer stated, “ When I left the Tribe in 1985, I guess we employed upwards of 600 to 700 people . . . In 1975, we had revenue of probably five or six million dollars, and it began to grow quickly. By 1985, I’d say our revenues were around fifty or sixty million.” To accommodate the growth of the Cherokee Nation, Tribal offices moved into a new 54,000-square-foot complex in September 1979.

Swimmer explained,

About ’79, I think the revenue from the Tribe coming in was around forty million for programs that the Tribe was operating, because in 1975, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which allowed tribes to have a much greater participation in programs that were operated by BIA and Indian Health Service. So, they [the Cherokee Nation] took over a lot of those programs, and one of the benefits of that – which could be good or bad – is that, if the Tribe operates a program and contracts to do this, they get an overhead allowance. That overhead gets to be taken off of the top, and the Tribe can use it then to support the government basically. You can pay for your personnel department, you can allocate some to pay for the accounting department, you can pay for space costs, and things like that. So, from the overhead that the Tribe is allowed to operate federal programs, you make enough money, you know, to basically support a modest institution. And, that’s the way the Tribe worked, frankly, until they got into the casino business. Because, again, there just really wasn’t any real independent revenue.

Swimmer’s second term found him spending more of his time in Washington, working on a settlement for the Arkansas Riverbed claim and the railroad station grounds (*Cherokee Nation vs. U.S.*) settlement. The railroad station grounds claim was settled in District Court, Muskogee, Oklahoma, for five or six million dollars. However, the Riverbed claim was turning into a time-consuming legal battle. Filed in 1965, by Earl Boyd Pierce, Swimmer, in 1973 as Tribal attorney, started work on the Riverbed claim.

An agreement with the federal government to settle was not reached until 2003.

Swimmer stated that the length of time to settle Indian cases was “peculiar to Indian cases.”

Swimmer explained:

I'd spent a great deal of time between '79 and '83 in Washington, working on the settlement for the Arkansas Riverbed and the railroad station grounds settlement. We achieved the settlement on the station grounds and I think we got paid five or six million dollars on that. We didn't get the other one – the Riverbed – until just recently. Around 2001 or 2002, I guess. But, I was in Washington an awful lot of that time. So, it gave people an opportunity back here to do some things that I didn't think were very appropriate. It really concerned me.

The Bell Community Project – Implementing a Model for Community Self-Sufficiency

Ross Swimmer did not have formal training in leadership. He is on record as believing leadership to be instinctive and learned. However, Swimmer was willing to learn, and spent time early in his administration investigating different groups involved in the business of social service. After four years of visiting Cherokee communities, Swimmer began to think about building self-sufficiency. The developing model and subsequent policy of self-sufficiency germinated with the Cherokees problem of and treatment of alcoholism.

Swimmer gives a lengthy explanation on the emergence of his belief in the importance of self-sufficiency for the Cherokee people.

I came to the conclusion just dumping money out here in the communities, with nothing expected in return, was not going to get us anywhere. One of the classic examples of what happened with poverty programs out of the war on poverty was in our alcoholism. It's a story I use over and over because it's emblematic of all the other kinds of service programs we often times abuse, I think. For years, we received an alcoholism grant from Indian Health Services. It was around a half-million dollars. After a couple of years, I asked the director of the program, “What do we do with the money?” “Well, we're basically working with people

who are addicted and have problems. We counsel them and we help them find jobs.”

At one time we operated a halfway house, and I said, “What is the success? What is the result? How do we keep getting this money?” She said, “It’s basically based on numbers. If you have so many people that have this demonstrated condition, we write a grant and tell them how many counselors we need, space we need and this sort of thing, and we get the grant.” I said, “Well, that’s interesting.” I asked, “Have we ever been asked to give statistics on how many days, weeks, years, of sobriety we’ve achieved with anyone?” She just sort of looked at me strangely. I said, “Then the result of the program is that we’ve generated more alcoholics in order to keep our grant.” “Well, no – but we have a lot of people out there that need our services [replied the director], so we’re able to continue this.” And, I said, “Well, if you’d been able to achieve sobriety and you knew that what you were doing was achieving sobriety, you wouldn’t necessarily receive that same amount of money, would you?” Her attitude was, “There’ll be plenty around.”

That happens too often [Swimmer said]. I saw it back then. I don’t think I had any particular insight more than anyone else. It just seemed to me that we, collectively, were not result oriented in our social service programs. The same thing in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Each month they gave out welfare checks. We contract that program from the BIA, and I talked to the social workers and asked them, How do you measure success? They basically told me the same thing. It’s measured on caseload. The more people we have in caseload, that’s what determines how many social workers there are, and that determines what our payments are going to be – what our bonus might be. I said, “Well, if you’re going to work for us, I want to know how many people you’ve been able to get off of welfare. I’m going to base your compensation on how successful you are in getting people placed into work activities where they can become self-supportive. I want you to go out there and find a way to help people become independent. You can’t just transfer them to another program. I want them to be either getting an education or going to work so they have independence. I don’t want them dependent on the tribe anymore.” So, I think the first year, we cut the caseload by a third; and by the second year, about a half.

Swimmer’s policy of self-sufficiency was not without criticism. According to

Nabokov (1991):

Reaganism hurt Native Americans as it did poor Americans everywhere. “In 1983 alone,” summarized sociologist Stephen Cornell, “[Indian] aid was slashed by more than a third, from \$3.5 billion to \$2 billion, affecting programs on every reservation.

Ross O. Swimmer, a Cherokee businessman from Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was Reagan’s point man for Indian affairs. As tribal chairman back in Oklahoma,

Swimmer tripled income from tribal-owned businesses between 1975 and 1986. Instead of praising welfare workers for their number of clients, he rewarded them when they found alternative support for the impoverished or impaired – lowering the Cherokee caseload by a third. Retaining culture and language might be desirable, Swimmer believed, but not at the cost of keeping Indians poor, dependent, or unproductive. The Reagan-Swimmer watchword was “economic development” founded upon tribal initiative, private ownership, and the profit motive (Nabokov, P., 1991, p. 406).

Swimmer attended seminars to better understand how to bring local, state and federal government grant makers together to negotiate small community improvement projects. Swimmer stated, “I suppose a lot of my ideas came from the Rensselaerville Institute (Rensselaerville, NY). I think I found them by attending a Kettering Foundation seminar. After listening to their concepts, I approached them on the idea of applying their model in a rural area of Eastern Oklahoma, using county, state and federal government, and the Cherokee Nation, which covers fourteen counties. I told them it was primarily five counties, though, the heart of the Cherokee Nation.”

The Kettering Foundation agreed to provide a small grant to Swimmer for the project he had in mind; but, since Kettering had no experience working in rural areas, they suggested bringing in a consultant from New York, the Rensselaerville Institute (then called the Institute on Man and Science). The Institute and Swimmer were a good fit, as they both ascribed to the experimental policy of empowering people by self-help.

Swimmer stated:

I had been asked by the people in Bell [community], since I'd been Chief, to come down there and try and help them get water because they had the proverbial tar-paper shack and no water. Indian Health wouldn't put bathrooms in because there was no water. They couldn't put water in because the bathrooms weren't there. It was one of those things that the government just said, “We're never going to do anything.” What you find in these kinds of situations – in any social service area – is that people become very patient – people will wait forever if they

think that help is on the way. What you have to do is change the mindset to: We can do it ourselves.

Swimmer was told by the Rensselaerville Institute that working with their principles: (1) the government is not going to help; (2) convincing the community they had the power to do the project themselves; and, (3) they could do the project themselves, Rensselaerville would work with the community and they would bring in their “experts” to help. Previously, Rensselaerville had worked on two rural projects in the eastern United States, and they were anxious to again test their self-sufficiency model on building a water pipeline in the traditional Cherokee community of Bell.

Three young Cherokees appeared at this time with ties to the communities: Wilma Mankiller (who would eventually become Ross Swimmer’s Deputy Chief and then the first woman Principal Chief of the Cherokees); Chad Smith (current Principal Chief of the Cherokees); and Charlie Soap (according to Margaret Swimmer, “Charlie was really the community person”). Recognizing their skills and needing their relationships and close contacts within the traditional communities, Swimmer hired the three young Cherokees. Swimmer gave them the opportunity to begin leadership training by implementing the Rensselaerville model of leadership tailored to the Bell community.

The new hires started the project by helping Swimmer with the first step of enrollment. Swimmer explained, “Because it was primarily a Cherokee community, they weren’t enrolled. They didn’t have membership in the Cherokee Nation” (many of the traditional Cherokees had resisted enrollment). The enrollment process needed to be set up because Swimmer had to buy some of the supplies, like pipe, from the Indian Health Service, and their first question was always, “How many Indians are you going to serve?”

Second, organizing community meetings for the purpose of distributing the message of the Renselaerville principles. Third, dialoging by the sharing of ideas. As community enthusiasm grew, the organizational meetings became more formal, with a focus of making concrete plans for the project – building a sixteen-mile water pipeline. Fifth, training sessions were given the community, as its members would be serving as the labor force. Finally, rules of behavior were established. For example, no alcohol was allowed. Swimmer believes the Bell Project brought the Bell community together and was a successful effort in building community self-sufficiency.

Using a housing design developed by the Renselaerville Institute, the Bell project was expanded by building 25 homes in the community. Total self-help was implemented. According to Conley (2005), “The Bell Community self-help project, which resulted in several rehabilitated homes and a new sixteen-mile water line for the community, received national attention” (p. 221).

David Cornsilk had a different perspective:

I don't believe the project was totally successful because you go to the Bell community and it's still impoverished. It is still filled with homes falling apart and the water line has deteriorated. So, the long-term effect of the project is lacking. The immediate effect of it at the time was there were people with fresh water. That did inspire the community to do some things for itself – some self-help type things – like building the community center and having the Bell pow-wow. But, the long-range goal of self-help community development is to sustain it – that it changes the community in a way that the community sees self-help and working among themselves to promote a better life style as an integral part of their thought process.

Facing Cancer with Courage and Determination

The year 1979, for Swimmer, was filled with trips to Washington, D. C., working on the claim settlements. As Swimmer stated, “I wasn’t able to spend as much time out in the communities because I was away from Oklahoma, and away from the Tribe, going back and forth up there to work on things, as well as bringing more federal money into the Tribe.” Swimmer relied on his staff, and on Perry Wheeler, his Deputy Chief. Everything was working quite well for Swimmer until 1980, when “a little knot” on his neck was diagnosed as lymphoma. After the diagnosis, Swimmer’s trips to D. C. were interrupted, and the number of his public appearances diminished.

The cancer protocol treatments were given on Wednesdays. Swimmer was then out of the office until the following Mondays. Margaret Swimmer stated, “He still worked twelve to fourteen hours a day.” After the diagnosis, Swimmer went to M. D. Anderson Hospital in Houston. Soon after, treatments were moved to St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa. At this point, Swimmer’s mother came to help drive Swimmer back and forth from Tulsa to his office, as, after the treatments, he was physically not able to drive. Public criticism entered their lives over this arrangement. Margaret was in law school, and people could not understand why she remained in school since her husband had been diagnosed with cancer.

Swimmer stated, “This was a horrible thing. People would say, ‘Well, Margaret, why aren’t you home with your husband? He’s going through this awful thing of cancer.’ Well, I told people, ‘I’ve got to take these treatments every three weeks, and I’m working the rest of the time. Why would I want her to drop out of law school to come home and

be a nursemaid to me?’ They said at the outset that I had an eighty percent chance of recovery.”

Apparently these travel arrangements became a burden on the Swimmer family, and Swimmer made the decision to complete his treatments at the Hastings Indian Hospital in Tahlequah. Augmenting the chemotherapy treatment of Western medicine, Swimmer consulted with one of the Cherokee traditional medicine men and “was given some herbal medicines from time to time. I figured it could not hurt, and one never knows what might work.”

By 1982, Swimmer “began to get signals that the Deputy Chief, Perry Wheeler, was interested in taking over.” The news was not welcomed, as Swimmer was still in treatment for lymphoma and a new election for Principal Chief was only one year away, 1983.

Swimmer explained at length:

They’d convinced themselves that I was going to die and that I was out of my mind – that I wasn’t thinking straight. I never stopped working. Just every three weeks, I took off for three or four days to go have chemo, and then I’d go back to the office. But, they were convinced I was going to die. They didn’t think I was going to live out my term, so they started what I considered to be a take-over of the Tribe. As I saw this happening, I said, well, this is just the wrong time for me to leave. What was actually happening is that we were going through some turmoil. Some of the folks I’d trusted, relied on, simply weren’t producing, and that’s all I require of people. I want them to produce. I want them to do what they’re supposed to do. And, some of the senior management [in accounting] were just not getting the job done, and so I had to let some folks go. That created a real political controversy. It was considered political, and it wasn’t.

A couple of the people were very good friends with Wheeler. Wheeler was an old-style politician and certainly believed in the patronage system. If somebody helped you get elected, then, by golly, you owed them a job. You shouldn’t let anybody go that’s helped you. I just didn’t operate that way. I always cherish friendships, but when it came down to work, you had to perform.

And, if you weren't performing, then you needed to go someplace else and find something you wanted to do.

By now, the Tribe was becoming not only a major employer, but also a major influence in eastern Oklahoma, and had substantial income from the federal government. The last thing I wanted it to do was to fall into the trap of the old style politics of eastern Oklahoma, and become just another patronage organization. I hadn't planned to run in 1983. When I saw this beginning to happen, I thought, well, if I don't run, then Perry's going to be elected Chief and I don't think that's where I want to leave the Tribe.

So, I went ahead and told people that I had decided to run again for re-election and, of course, Perry said that he could not support me. In fact, he ran against me. I needed a Deputy Chief, and thought about Wilma [Mankiller]. So, I asked her. I said, "Look, you have the experience at Bell, and I'm totally involved in lobbying for the Riverbed settlement. It's worth thirty million dollars to us, and I think it's important that we get it done." I said, "I've got to be in Washington, but I really need a Deputy Chief who can stay in the community – who will work. You've demonstrated the knowledge and ability to do that, and I'd like you to consider it."

Boy! Was that a tough election.

Ross O. Swimmer's Third Term (1983-1985)

Swimmer asked Wilma Mankiller to run as his Deputy Chief without any thought of repercussions. "I just did it because I thought it was the right thing to do. I've always admired strong women, and I've always had women who worked for me. I just couldn't imagine anybody saying this was a bad idea because I was asking a woman to run as Deputy Chief." Swimmer's decision to ask Wilma Mankiller to run as his Deputy Chief was very unpopular. Conley stated,

In 1983, Chief Swimmer was once again elected. This time his running mate was Wilma Mankiller, and she became the Deputy Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, in spite of considerable opposition to the idea of having a woman in that position. Chief Mankiller recalls, "Although Swimmer had chosen me as deputy and had stuck with me through the rough campaign, there were major differences between us. He was a republican banker with a very conservative viewpoint, and I was a democratic social worker and community planner who had organized and worked for Indian civil and treaty rights. Also, I had been elected along with a fifteen-member tribal council that, for the most part, did not support me" (Conley, R., 2005, p. 221).

Margaret Swimmer added, “Wilma called it revolutionary that you asked her at that time. People would say, ‘Ross, we really want you as Chief, but we just can’t vote for a woman.’ I just seethed. Ross said, ‘Well, that’s your choice’ [to the potential voter].”

Swimmer was successful in his bid for a third term as Principal Chief – barely. “I won on the first ballot with just barely over fifty percent of the vote, which was down from 1979, when I won by about 70 or 68 percent.”

Two years into his third term as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Swimmer was nominated by President Reagan to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Swimmer accepted; Wilma Mankiller, by Cherokee Constitutional law, became Principal Chief. Swimmer stated he was leaving the Cherokee Nation with a foundation for continued growth. Further, he believed Mankiller to be a capable leader. “We’d built the complex by then, and had most of the infrastructure of the Tribe pretty much under control. Things were working pretty well.”

Swimmer’s progressive work as Principal Chief had not gone unnoticed by Washington, D. C. In the April 14, 1984, Regular Council Meeting, the official minutes state:

Chief Swimmer stated that he has been contacted by the Secretary of the Interior, William Clark to discuss the possibility of the Cherokee Nation becoming a model tribe in developing a model program that could be emulated by other tribes involving contracting of all services provided by the BIA. Secretary Clark wanted the Tribe to explore a total takeover of bureau services at the area and central levels.

Chief Swimmer explained that for now the relationship that the Tribe has with the Federal Government is totally a guardian/ward relationship. The Bureau serves as the Tribe’s trustee on anything that the Tribe wishes to do. Chief Swimmer stated that the Secretary of Interior would like to see if there is any tribe

that has the sufficient structure that qualifies as a functioning government that is willing to assume the responsibilities (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma Regular Council Meeting, April 14, 1984, book 2, Page 102).

In 1985, Ross O. Swimmer resigned his position as Principal Chief of the Cherokees, to become the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The following announcement was made by Swimmer during the October 12, 1985 Council Meeting:

Chief Swimmer announced that he has been nominated by President Reagan to position of Assistant Secretary to the Department of Interior, and has submitted his name to the Senate for confirmation. Chief Swimmer announced Senate Confirmation Hearings on this appointment will be held next week. The Chief stated if the Senate confirms his appointment it will require his leaving his position as Chief. The Chief explained he feels very strongly that the Tribe is in very good hands and his taking the position can only enhance the future of the Tribe and hopefully other tribes (Cherokee Nation Of Oklahoma Regular Council Meeting, October 12, 1985).

The researcher found no further discussion on record of Swimmer's likely upcoming resignation. The Council Minutes show Swimmer as Principal Chief, November 7, 1985; Wilma Mankiller as Principal Chief, December 14, 1985. The researcher found no Council discussion on record of the leadership transition between Swimmer and Mankiller.

The researcher was puzzled by this historical change of Principal Chiefs and the appearance of lack of comments on record, and asked Chapman (interview participant), by telephone, for an explanation. Chapman said that, as far as Swimmer was concerned, "There was no discussion." Swimmer told Chapman, "When the President of the United States asks you to do something, you are going to do it."

Question 1 – *Identified Leadership Characteristics of Ross O. Swimmer*

From the stories of the interview participants and documents reviewed, seven leadership characteristics emerged from the data as Swimmer leadership characteristics. These seven leadership characteristics are placed in a separate category from the second category of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics which are discussed in the following section. The seven identified leadership characteristics assume a hue of modernism, as opposed to traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics.

Swimmer was described as visionary and an authoritarian leader who implemented a bureaucratic structure with top-down power and utilized moderate task delegation. Swimmer was highly goal-oriented; and through using the communication tool of the *Cherokee Column's*, Swimmer attempted to reunite and educate the Cherokee people. Occasionally, an interview participant would attribute a leadership characteristic to Swimmer outside of the seven leadership characteristics placed in Category I. For example, Chapman's (interview participant) opinion was that Swimmer, in many ways, was Cherokee – ways finding expression not only in his personality, but Swimmer's leadership characteristics, as well. For example, Chapman stated: "He [Swimmer] was naturally stoic, his public face expressed no emotion." Chapman continued, "Ross may or may not respond to a negative comment in public; but when he and I [Chapman] were alone, he would discuss and re-discuss the situation with me." In their discussion of American Indian personality types, the Spindlers found several psychological and cultural characteristics in common among Native American people. "Non-demonstrative emotionality and reserve accompanied by a high degree of control over interpersonal

aggression” was found to be a stable (core) feature representative of a common cultural characteristic (Spindler & Spindler, 1957, p. 148).

Chapman continued, “Although most of the time Ross did not understand Cherokee humor, he did have a sense of humor. [He] had an intellectual sense of humor. He just didn’t know how to tell a joke very well. He didn’t have very good timing and would often flub the punch line . . . Ross was very, very smart. He was a born leader.”

Visionary/Goal Oriented

Upon taking his first oath of office, 1975, Swimmer knew what he wanted to accomplish for the Cherokee Nation. The words “visionary” and “goal oriented” frequently were heard during the interviews. Margaret Swimmer judged her husband to be a leader with vision. “He had the vision as to what needed to be done and that’s what he developed into in those years. He was able to develop the ability to go in and have the facts presented to him, and just see an overall picture and just somehow begin a formulation . . . immediately, he could see that three things needed to be done in the communities when he became Chief: increase health care, improve education, and provide jobs.” David Cornsilk stated, “Ross was an idea man.” Neil Morton suggested, “Ross’s strength was being able to get a global perspective of the Tribe from the vantage of a mountain top. But, he didn’t come off the mountain top.”

Swimmer had a vision of creating a service organization for the Cherokee people. He planned to “help get them on their feet so they, in the long term, would not need the Cherokee Nation.” Swimmer envisioned creating jobs, building self-sufficiency, and

instilling a lost sense of pride. These goals would be accomplished through Swimmer's plans for creating businesses, and improving health care and education.

Swimmer's vision and goals were stymied until he complied with the BIA's mandate of writing a Cherokee Constitution. Porter's work imputes a hidden Machiavellian maneuver in the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. Porter hypothesizes, "[T]he extension of written constitutional and corporate governments to the Indian nations under the IRA was consistent with the colonizing society's philosophy of revitalizing Indian societies in the mirror image of its own institutions" (Porter, 1997, p. 84-85). In 1975, Swimmer's goals were affected by thirty-year-old legislation. The Cherokee did not have a constitution, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs was insisting one be in place before they would contract with the Tribe. Desperately needing money, Swimmer wrote the 1976 Cherokee Constitution during his first term in office.

Swimmer understood that, in order to achieve cohesion in the Tribe, initiate the steps toward a centralized government and begin the work toward his visionary goals, the Tribe needed money to function. Swimmer knew the entry to the essential federal money was a Cherokee Constitution. Swimmer's decisions fit with Bass's (1990) short discussion of vision, which encompasses a leader's "sense of timing, his appreciation for the gravity of the problem, and the urgency created to propose a solution" (p. 103). During Swimmer's decade as leader of the Cherokee Nation, he constantly made historic decisions. While these decisions were not without criticism, Swimmer's decisions as a leader have left a deep footprint on the Cherokee Nation of today.

The data indicate that Swimmer brought about transformation during his ten years as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Gardner makes the point that changes take time and require “slow shifts in attitude. [Transformational leaders] may see little result from heroic efforts may be setting the stage in a crucial way for victories that will come after them” (Gardner, January, 1986, p. 15).

David Cornsilk (interview participant) alluded to the possible transitory nature of societal transformation among Cherokee people.

Some things happened in the Cherokee Nation. You know how a mushroom kind of pops up in the middle of a rainstorm, but it doesn't last very long? That's what I see as Ross's contribution to the Cherokee Nation. He is a mushroom in a rainstorm. But, when the sun comes out, I don't know if those things are going to be able to last very long because the foundation upon which they are built is very weak.

Transformational leaders are accorded the attribute of being visionary (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Transformational leadership attempts “to reenergize forgotten goals or to generate new goals appropriate to new circumstances” (Gardner, 1990, p. 122).

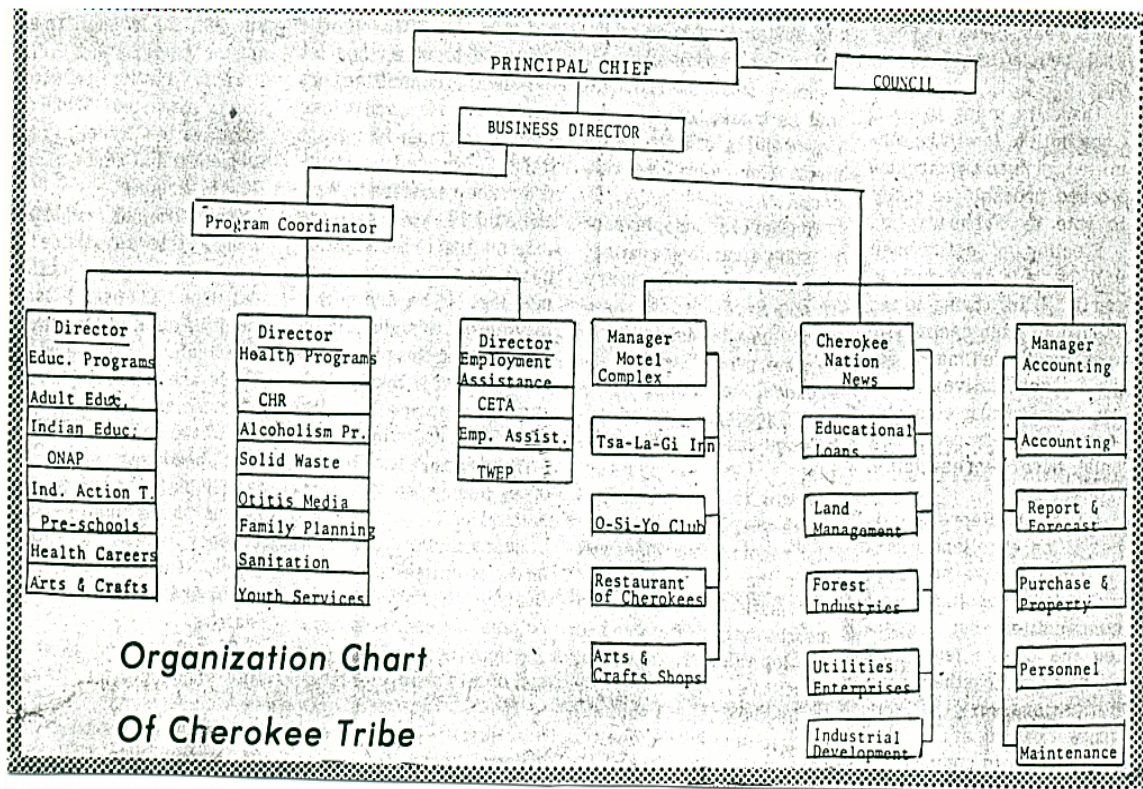
According to Bolman and Deal, transformational leaders are agents of change. However, the data appear to indicate the Cherokee people were not certain a transformation in their lifeways needed to take place. Further, the Cherokee people were not certain what such a transformation should resemble. Much dissent, unrest and hesitancy resided among the Cherokee people at this time. According to O'Brien, Indian people (including the Cherokee) feared accepting offers from the federal government, as, “Soon as tribes proved they were capable of managing their own programs and services, Congress would terminate the trust relationship” (O'Brien, 1993, p. 266). A second reason for their hesitancy might have been due to the lack of experience and education in the modern

politics of government. Swimmer's task was to educate the people and lead them into the future. The data indicate Swimmer's leadership was defined by the employment of leadership characteristics suggesting leadership skills contingent on the situation of the Cherokee Tribe in 1975-1985 (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Witherspoon, 1997).

Bureaucratic/Top-Down

Swimmer's early view of building the Cherokee Nation was that doing so would not be difficult. He stated, "I mean this isn't anything really difficult – it's a typical hierarchical organization." Swimmer put in place a hierarchical organization, and staffed the newly created departments; he made corrections in his initial structure as he learned, and as the departments evolved due to growth. Following is a picture of the chart of the first organizational structure of the new Cherokee Nation. The chart is pictorial, provided for the purpose of displaying the classic top-down bureaucratic administration. Weber's principles of organization are implied: (1) hierarchical structure; (2) division of labor; (3) control by rules; (4) impersonal relationships, and (5) career orientation (Hanson, 2003, p. 16).

Organization Chart of the Cherokee Tribe (1975)



The Cherokee Nation News, Volume 8 Number 45, November 7, 1975 p. 1; ONAP [Office of Native American Programs]; CHR [Community Health Representatives]; CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act]; TWEP [Tribal Work Experience Program]; Tsa-La-Gi [The word ‘Cherokee’ when spoken in the Iroquoian language].

The Organization Chart featured above represents Chief Swimmer’s first departmental mappings. Within two years, Swimmer reorganized his developing bureaucratic structure after “watching the Tribe work. I had to separate the private sector business side of the Tribe from the social service side of the Tribe because they operated totally different.” Swimmer did not change the structure’s top-down focus, however, and his top-down approach was not without criticism. Cornsilk (interview participant) stated,

“The person at the very top holds so much power. It’s not a bottom-up kind of government. The governing model was new with Ross, and he honed it. I can’t say that, what we have today, he intended for it to be this way. But, he set our feet on this path.”

Swimmer, in his initial interview, studied the 1975 Organization Chart with interest. After a lengthy, quiet period of thought, Swimmer gave the following reason for reorganizing the tribal structure in 1977.

If you look at this chart, it shows the business director – everybody is up through the business director to me – well, the business director had land management, forest industries, utilities, industrial development, as well as all of accounting. He is also responsible for the program coordinator, who has all the social service programs. These are all zero-based funding [Swimmer pointed to the left side of the chart]. These programs we got from the federal government; and if you didn’t spend 100% of your money, you didn’t get it that year. So, there was always an effort to dump money. If you are operating with the same mentality on the business side, you are going to go broke. I said, How can we look at building a business base for the Tribe when we have people with a mindset that you are not supposed to make a profit? So, by mid-1977, we functionally divided the Tribe into two divisions.

Swimmer’s procession of the task of re-building the Cherokee government is supported by Bass and Stodgill, who state that, in certain situational contingencies, “The task orientation fits the hierarchies [model]” (Bass & Stodgill, 1990, p. 485).

The chart pictured above has historical significance in that it pictorially offers an original, rudimentary drawing, in marked contrast to the computerized improvements later put in place by Chief Swimmer. Don Vaughn’s (interview participant – non-tribal member) comments were particularly insightful, as he was key to and witnessed the benefits of Swimmer’s insistence of implementing a computerized system and bringing the Cherokee Nation into modern accounting compliance. According to Vaughn,

I think a certain amount of bureaucracy and a certain amount of the general mindset about business today has to be adopted to some degree by the Cherokee Nation in order to function and to be able to continue toward growth within this society. You can't live in isolation. You have to adjust to your environment to some degree. And, I think the Cherokees have been pretty good at doing that. That's recognizing the realities of where you are. I think this conflicts to some extent with the traditional mindset. Some might say bureaucracy is not needed. But, without it, things can end up in chaos. There are additional problems with the federal government and the parties you deal with in society, in general. The end result is that it [bureaucracy] might hamper to some degree the traditional mindset.

Authoritarian

In applying the term authoritarian to Swimmer, the researcher draws from Hanson's discussion of authority, as found in Hanson's (2003) explanation of Weber's definition of an "Ideal-type bureaucracy" (p. 17). According to Weber, three pure types of authority comprise the concept's definition: (1) legitimacy sanctioned by tradition; (2) charisma of the leader, and (3) "legal-rational authority based on a belief in the supremacy of the law" (p. 18).

The Cherokee gave authority to Swimmer due to his legitimate election as Principal Chief. Swimmer was accorded authority to lead by Cherokee constitutional law. The data did not indicate that the Cherokee people viewed Swimmer as a charismatic personality.

Swimmer used the legitimate and legal authority as elected Chief of the Cherokees to build an organization often using the metaphor of a "mechanical devise" (Hanson, 2003, p. 18). Hanson (2003) cites Perrow (1973), "The process of bureaucratization involves the formalization, standardization, and rationalization of rules and roles around the mission of the organization" (p. 23). Interestingly, Don Vaughan

(interview participant) used a related analogy to Hanson's "mechanical devise."

Vaughan also speaks to Swimmer's "vision" in the following interview excerpt.

I guess maybe one way to describe it was that the vehicle had been pretty much built, but the engine had not been fully developed. So, what was occurring during that time was simply to have a structure in place that might lead to a lot of future growth and development. And, so I think in terms of his leadership style, I generally felt like Ross Swimmer had a vision of where the Cherokee Nation needed to go without a lot of the essential mechanics, or the wheels in place to make some of that development actually occur. Yet, I would see his administration as being very much a building block on which some of that future development occurred.

Complicating an attempt to answer the study's first question, the findings are not consistent when discussing each of the emerged leadership characteristics assigned to Swimmer, nor have the leadership characteristics ascribed to Swimmer emerged from the data with total clarity. For example, the Cherokee Constitution, patterned in some ways after the United States Constitution, explicitly stated in every recorded Council meeting the authority given to Swimmer. The Cherokee Council Minutes clearly state that the U.S. Congress desires Indian tribes to assume responsibility for the services provided them through various federal agencies. The Cherokee Nation's Constitution "stipulates that the Principal Chief is responsible for executing and managing the business affairs of the Tribe, including entering into contractual agreements" (Regular Council Meeting, 11/12/83 Page two). Further, the Cherokee Council gave complete authority to Swimmer to delegate responsibility for all duties required by federal regulations, to negotiate and enter into federal contracts.

Over time, however, as the Council came to understand their role, gaining confidence in the process, indications are that they relied on consensus to achieve their

goals. Clarence Sunday, Cherokee Councilman, was quoted in the *Cherokee Advocate* (1985), “We [Cherokee Council] don’t readily agree with each other, but we are able to arrive at a consensus of the best approach to solving the difficult issues of which we are confronted” (Volume IX Number 3, March, p. 4).

Given such broad authority, Swimmer typically made unilateral decisions. When the times so dictate, according to Bass (1990), “A leader with more relevant knowledge than the followers will not seek community input and move ahead toward his goals” (p. 419). Contradicting his authoritarian leadership style, the data confirm Swimmer would frequently ask for input from various Cherokee community leaders; but, often, he did not use their advice in his decision making process. Patsy E. Morton (interview participant) offered that, as an elected Council member, Swimmer would often call her by phone to ask her opinion on various business decisions. P. Morton would offer advice. and then Swimmer “would go off and do what he wanted to do.”

“Chief Swimmer reported that the Tribe has conducted two public hearings, one in Jay, Oklahoma, and one in Muldrow, Oklahoma. These hearings are being held to solicit comments and proposals from tribal members regarding the use of funds . . .” (Cherokee Nation Of Oklahoma Regular Council Meeting, April 13, 1985).

Historically, the Cherokee have placed an extremely high value on education. The possibility does exist that, because of the limitation of the educational opportunities and curriculum offered to Cherokees in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their education was not in the areas necessary to move the Cherokee Nation forward in government and business development, or so Swimmer thought. The few college-educated Cherokees of

the time period held degrees in education. Patsy E. Morton (interview participant) was quite proud of the fact that every member of the first elected Council were college educated, “with at least one degree.” Moreover, Swimmer may have not understood and thus appreciated the importance of the vast experiential knowledge held by the traditional Cherokee population.

Swimmer countered the constant criticism by traditional Cherokees that he did not hire enough Cherokees by saying to Chapman (interview participant), “If we ever find an Indian who can do the job, we’ll hire them.” According to Chapman, “Swimmer hired as many Cherokees to fill the jobs as he thought were capable of doing the work. His main focus was on getting the job done.”

Swimmer, as an attorney and businessman, did have the necessary legal, financial and political experience to confront the many difficulties facing the Cherokee Tribe in the early 1970s. According to the *Cherokee Advocate*, Mankiller stated, “In 1975, when Ross Swimmer assumed leadership of the Cherokee Nation, we were a small, financially troubled Indian tribe. The Cherokee people, mostly living in remote, rural areas, were in dire need of every imaginable type of human service” (Volume IX Number 10, October, 1985, p. 13). As Margaret Swimmer indicated in her interview, any Indian with a law degree, willing to work for his/her tribe, was a rare person to find in the early 1970s.

Because of the legal/business work in which Swimmer engaged prior to his election as Chief, Swimmer was already experienced to some extent as an intermediary between the federal government, Congress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and all of the people with necessary access to purse strings. Armed with this work experience and

aided by the political introductions given to Swimmer by W. W. Keeler, Swimmer stepped into the role of leader, and was immediately dealt the job of orchestrating politicians and various governmental institutions and motivating tribal members who maintained different philosophical orientations within the Cherokee Nation. Although Swimmer described himself as “not a people person,” he was credited with being a very persuasive speaker.

An example frequently used by the interview participants to speak to Swimmer’s leadership characteristic of being autocratic was the process he implemented in the writing of and the successful passage of the 1976 Cherokee Constitution. Swimmer campaigned on producing a constitution, and he kept his word. However, the Constitution was written his way, and became known as the “Swimmer Constitution.” According to Lemont, when Swimmer took office, a community group had been working on the Constitution “for over ten years (p. 6), trying to recreate the Cherokee Constitution of 1939. The slow pace was frustrating to Swimmer. Shortly after he was elected, Swimmer formed a small group ‘that would push through with completing work on a new constitution’” (Lemont, 2001, p. 6). Additionally, Swimmer chose a non-traditional Cherokee way of government; the unicameral Council formation, as opposed to a bicameral structure. Swimmer stated, “I insisted on having a smaller council . . . otherwise, you would never get anything done.” Swimmer’s successful path to the new Cherokee Constitution suggests an authoritarian style of leadership and the use of power as the author and top decision-maker of its legal language.

The data often appeared to be contradictory, however, when the researcher attempted to place Swimmer in one cultural leadership characteristic category. For example, while Swimmer's behavior included often making decisions and implementing policy with speed (a leadership characteristic distrusted by traditional Cherokees), Swimmer stated, in *The Cherokee Nation News* (1976): "Because of the disarray of the Cherokees' business and programs I encountered upon taking the office of Chief, I certainly am not anxious for the Tribe to begin new ventures until we have a solid foundation from which to work" (Volume 9 Number 6, 2-6-76, p. 1). Such examples by Swimmer, of picking and choosing various cultural characteristics to use in solving the difficulties of the situation, can be construed as an age-old traditional Cherokee leadership methodology (Strickland, 1982).

As Swimmer educated the Cherokee People through his weekly, *Swimmer Columns*, he stressed several important reasons for the Cherokees to consider adoption of a new constitution. If an updated, modern constitution is not written and adopted, "The Cherokees will continue with a form of government [based on the 1839 Cherokee Constitution] that allows one-man rule and restricts the ultimate responsibility for the Tribe to the Principal Chief" (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9, Number 4, January 23, 1976, p. 1). Swimmer's motive was not to rule, but to form a democracy.

Ambivalence emerged in the various stories of the interview participants regarding Swimmer's leadership style. On the one hand, they realized his accomplishments for the Tribe and recognized that his accomplishments strengthened the

Tribe. On the other hand, they begrudgingly gave Swimmer recognition for these improvements.

Neil Morton (interview participant) gives an example of frequently heard mixed Swimmer criticism/compliments. Morton stated, “Swimmer lacked a connection to the people. He was a corporate person, and he had definite ideas of what should happen down here in community X, but he didn’t visit community X before, during or after the project; or, get on a casual conversation with people from community X. But, a strength of Ross is, he had the ability to get things done.”

Delegator

Neil Morton (interview participant) stated: “Ross delegated practically everything. But, the difference was in the follow-through. We would tell Ross what we planned to do. He continually followed-up, asking us where we were. He was objective. He measured. He just wouldn’t accept our word that we were doing good things and serving a lot of people. He wanted to know how we were serving the people. How are you evaluating your progress?”

N. Morton explained that, before Keeler and Swimmer, “few Chiefs in the history of the Tribe have been willing to turn over responsibility to the communities. Mr. Keeler didn’t have the opportunity because the only organizational structure the community had was what he encouraged them to create. So, the communities were barely at a functional stage when Ross came on board.” Morton’s observations imply that, although Swimmer was willing to delegate, he believed, by necessity, a watchful eye on outside assigned tasks came under the purview of his leadership.

Within the physical walls of the administration, however, Don Vaughn (interview participant) thought Swimmer did delegate, and left employees to do their jobs. Vaughn recalled,

I never felt that he was a micromanagement type person in terms of what we did. Of course, I had a boss above me that reported directly to Mr. Swimmer. I'm not sure what kind of interaction there may have been between those folks. But, I didn't see him as a micromanagement type of individual. Perhaps others would have seen him differently, but I didn't see that side of him. I think he made a deliberate attempt to let people do their jobs and not interfere with that work or necessarily have excessive control of that work. I always felt like his mindset was to try to develop at the Cherokee Nation, some of these – I guess the way to put it would be – like a Fortune 500 company. Eventually, the Cherokee Nation would have all of these different companies in place that would make it more independent, more self-sufficient, and less dependent upon the federal sources of funding. I think this was where his mission was trying to lead us. Again, that's just my impression. I think he was a very important part of the governmental structure that's here today.

Swimmer's second term still found the entrenched problems of gossip, power struggles, fear of top leadership, and lack of communication. In a countering effort, Swimmer formed "idea groups" at all levels of employment, to discuss this unhealthy social environment and to propose solutions. As a result of the "idea groups," Tribal structure was reorganized into seven department: (1) health and human services; (2) employment and training; (3) education; (4) business enterprise development; (5) administrative support; (6) tribal services; and, (7) community development (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume VI Number 1, August 1982, p. 2-3).

Swimmer stated, "With the exception of administration services and employment and training, the chairperson of each department reports directly to me for policy considerations. While I, with the support of the Tribal Council, establish administrative policies for the Tribe, the department chairperson and the program directors whom they

supervise are delegated great authority to operate the programs administered in their departments” (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume VI Number 1, August 1982, p. 2-3).

Communicator

The Origins of Swimmer’s Chief Lieutenant

According to Neil Morton,

Ross depended upon lieutenants to handle certain things, and there were certain parts of the Tribe that he didn’t understand. Ross’s strength was his ability to get things done through his lieutenant system. In my opinion, at times, he was a poor judge of strengths and weaknesses of people who he’d given responsibility to.

Gary D. Chapman’s (interview participant) story is of interest, as it yields early insights into Swimmer’s leadership characteristics of authority, delegating and communicating skills. Chapman’s story gives the reader another thoughtful look at the contradictory nature of the data, as a hint surfaced that Swimmer’s presence in the community was not going unnoticed by the traditional Cherokees.

Chapman’s story highlights a possible weakness inherent in Native American research of a false trap, a trap of being lulled into thinking that one understands and that one can make quick sense of an event, incident, or experience in Cherokee culture by solely relying on documents or passive observation to formulate Cherokee cultural theories. The data indicate an accurate understanding of the history, politics and cultural structure of a Cherokee community can only be achieved through the patience of listening to, understanding of, and the recognition of the willingness of the Cherokee to give researchers information through the form of a story. The stories are powerful and hold the key to vital knowledge sought by any interested academic (Brayboy, 2006; Fixico, 2003; Garrett, 1996).

Chapman recalled,

My mom connected me with Ross. It was in the 1970s, maybe 1973; my mom and dad came to the bank in Muskogee, and my full-blood, Cherokee-speaking mother and dad sat down in front of me. [The researcher reminded Chapman that his mom was not full-blood. He told me to trust him. She was. It was her nature, he said]. Dad did the talking, as this is the full-blood custom.

He said, “Your mother thinks you need to join up with this boy, Ross Swimmer, and you need to get him elected as Chief because he would make a very good Chief.” Mother nodded in agreement, and gave me a few hundred dollars to help run a campaign. I had never met Ross, but we got together and had pretty good chemistry. We both had the welfare of the Cherokee people in mind. He was about 28 or 29 years old at the time. I was five years older. I think he had left his position as attorney for the Housing Authority, and was president of National Bank in Tahlequah. I already knew W. W. Keeler. We spent a lot of time together. Both Keeler and Swimmer were very honest. I am not overstating this when I tell you they both had high integrity. We had no money for a campaign. I would be driving W. W. Keeler whenever he [Keeler] would visit the full-bloods in the communities. Keeler would ask me, “What do you boys need?” And Bill would always contribute to our campaign.

Chapman would play an important role in the Swimmer administration, and was given the nickname by the traditional Cherokees as Swimmer’s “Chief Lieutenant.”

Not understanding certain traditional Cherokee characteristics presented a problem for Swimmer. One critical hurdle was communication. Swimmer would tell Chapman how surprised he was at not being able to get his message across to the full-bloods. Swimmer just couldn’t understand why he was so misunderstood. Chapman explained that, “Swimmer’s intelligence was so far above the people in the communities, it was like oil talking to water.” Culbertson posits, when different backgrounds along with different levels of knowledge attempt to communicate, there can be substantial loss of meaning (Culbertson, 1998, p. 50). As Swimmer was learning how to campaign for his first election as Principal Chief, Chapman was by his side acting as a communications

bridge. It was Chapman's job to fill the communications gap of non-understanding between Swimmer and the full-bloods.

Chapman performed the same function between Swimmer and the first elected Council after the passage of the 1976 "Swimmer Constitution." After reading the Council minutes of Swimmer's first administration and observing a recurring pattern, the researcher asked Ross Swimmer, "It appears that almost every time you made suggestions/recommendations to the Council on anything, Gary Chapman was right there to recommend to Council its passage. It almost seems like Gary was your 'point man.' Was this the way you two set it up?"

Swimmer responded, "Gary and I were very close, and he was definitely my point man on the Council. We worked together before council meetings to be sure we were on the same track and rarely had a disagreement over the agenda items."

Chapman explained there was nothing sinister or "fixed" about their arrangement. Rather, Chapman was continuing his job of explaining, before session, what Swimmer meant by what he was going to say to the Council members. Since several Council members were full-bloods, Chapman's explanations were aimed at avoiding no misunderstandings in Swimmer's formal manner of articulating various agenda items.

Oratory skills are a strong leadership characteristic of traditional Cherokee leaders. It appears Swimmer did not give himself high marks in his effectiveness of communication. From David Cornsilk's (interview participant) perspective, Swimmer's speaking style could be mesmerizing. "In watching him, I think I was inspired by his ability to just sit down and explain what he believed and get people to understand it; and

even if they weren't necessarily supportive of it, to not oppose it. I think that probably was Ross's really strongest point, as far as leadership."

Communicating with the Cherokee people was very important to Ross Swimmer, as noted by his following statement.

The Cherokee Nation is no different from any other government. Following my election as Principal Chief, it took a few visits around the area to learn that the Tribe was not communicating with its members. Although we published a Tribal newsletter, it was being received by only a handful of people. The rest of the people were getting their information via the traditional moccasin telegraph. This form of communication resulted in misunderstandings, half-truths, and misrepresentations. Obviously, good communications was listed as a top priority need within the Tribe (*The Cherokee Nation News*. Volume 9 Number 20, May 14, 1976, p. 1).

Swimmer was certainly aware of the communication problem, and spent time visiting Cherokee communities and listening to stories from traditional elders and community leaders. Stories holding theories and solutions of and to their wants and needs were passed along to Swimmer in the typical manner of traditional Cherokee teacher/instruction. Swimmer would have to make a connection between theory and practice.

Several of the interview participants expressed a lack of trust in Swimmer. Perhaps they were suspicious of motives and subsequent policy actions, or perhaps they lacked understanding of his actions because of poor communication. However, a recurring "yin and yang" pattern appeared in discussing Swimmer's leadership characteristics; when one interview participant expressed lack of trust in Swimmer, another would point out Swimmer's position of needing to make all decisions without community input due to lack of instant communication. Gardner stated: "If the level of

trust is high, divisiveness and conflict are easier to hear; as it diminishes, the healing of rifts becomes difficult” (Gardner, March, 1986, p. 18).

The data from the current study indicate that many of Swimmer’s employed leadership characteristics received criticism from the Cherokee people. Criticism appears to be a magnet feature of Swimmer’s work. A companion leadership characteristic, which is constant throughout the data, is that Swimmer does not wither under criticism. He seems to study a problem, gather information, and then make his decision, tough decisions affecting many lives. Once the decision is made, he takes action with full confidence. If a mistake is made, he acknowledges his error, and the decision-making loop begins again.

In 2005, the researcher exchanged several emails with Tom McConnell, the first Director for the Cherokee Nation’s Talking Leaves Job Corps education program. McConnell, Margaret Swimmer’s brother, admitted he and Swimmer had strong disagreements over the allocation of Department of Labor Funds earmarked for the Job Corps program. Today, there are still residual hard feelings on the part of McConnell toward Swimmer. Nevertheless, Mr. McConnell stated,

Because of coming to the Tribe as the legal advisor for Housing, he [Swimmer] knew many of the financial people in that part of Oklahoma. A banker from Muskogee, Gary Chapman, was a supporter of his, and helped. Peter Manhart, the CEO of the First National Bank of Tahlequah, wound up offering Ross the presidency of the bank. That position helped tremendously in settling a firm business foundation [for the Cherokee Nation]. Therefore, I believe there was a conscious plan, a blueprint; and even after Ross went to be what used to be called the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he helped the Tribe. His feeling was always to move away from the dependency on the federal government and make it on one’s own (email on file with researcher).

McConnell's comments are important, as they follow an established pattern of the Cherokee people exhibiting their own duality when assessing the leadership of Swimmer. The content of interview participants' comments hold both credit for Swimmer's achievements as Principal Chief and variations of resentments and criticism. This finding is reminiscent of the Oedipus myth, where the complexities of cultural and political differences are found in the allusive nature of perceptions.

Question 2 – *Identified Swimmer Traditional Cherokee Leadership Characteristics*

The source data available for the purposes of this study was extremely limited, as the small amount of data found in the literature suffers from a lack of research on leadership extending to worldviews other than Anglo-European-American. Thus, the researcher was confined to using the meager list of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics as found in the literature. Seven leadership characteristics, reflecting Swimmer's leadership style, emerged from the data and were placed in a separate category.

However, when comparing the seven emerging primary characteristics of Swimmer's leadership style, it appears that these did not reflect all of the traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics, as defined in Chapter I, Definition of Terms. Only six of Swimmer's leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership values to some extent. These include: (1) harmony centered; (2) avoidance of conflict; (3) self-interest sublimated; (4) chosen based on competence; (5) led by example rather than authority, and (6) word was binding.

To achieve his goals, by necessity, Swimmer worked with two different constituencies: a state and federal bureaucratic structure, and the Cherokee people; Swimmer navigated two different political worlds. While Swimmer demonstrates, strongly, seven values or characteristics of Anglo-European-American leadership, he also evidences traditional Cherokee characteristics of leadership sufficiently to interact with the Cherokee people successfully.

The researcher recognizes many of the leadership characteristics falling under the traditional Native American leadership grouping (as defined in Chapter I, Definition of Terms), such as: public servant could possibly be included under the heading of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics. Although the data conferred on Swimmer public servant qualities, this leadership feature (with others, such as teaching) was not found as a Cherokee leadership characteristic specific in the literature. Therefore, public servant is not included in the second category of Swimmer's leadership characteristics: traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics.

According to Swimmer,

The Cherokees must provide the leadership that is so desperately needed in Indian Country today. Through good leadership, we can set examples that can be followed by other tribes, and offer assistance with their tribal governments. I am firmly convinced that we must become more aggressive in our dealings with government and other Indian tribes regarding protection of our natural resources, educational development, fiscal responsibility and fairness, and protection of treaty rights. Since we have had a one-man rule, it has been difficult to push as hard as sometimes necessary. Now the Principal Chief has an elected Council, there will be the weight of many voices behind the decisions of the tribal government (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9, Number 47, November 19, 1976, p. 1).

Swimmer's statement appears to reflect the main points of Steiner's (1968) description of a traditional Indian leader. That is, a Cherokee leader embodying the concept of a public servant (a point featured in the introduction), protecting the community, future generations, and the environment. However, the concept of aggressive action is a modern dimension of leadership introduced by Swimmer, and one tinged with the cudgel of Anglo-European origins.

The juxtaposed cultural traditional Cherokee leadership and Anglo-European-American cultural leadership attributes found in Swimmer illuminate the liminality (Brayboy, 2005) of mixed-bloods. In other words, mixed-bloods are betwixt and between a cultural space. This condition of liminality can create a duality in a modern Cherokee mixed-blood leader, allowing him/her to pick and choose from traditional leadership characteristics as well as Anglo-European-American characteristics, as needed, to accomplish necessary Tribal goals.

As Swimmer was the first non-traditional Principal Chief in the history of the Cherokee Nation, attempting to fit Swimmer into discrete foundational leadership characteristics of either traditional Cherokee or Anglo-European-American is too orderly. Swimmer had the capacity to use one characteristic in a particular situation and to follow that example by an unexpected absence of that characteristic in another. This expanded dimension of leadership is possibly due to Swimmer's unique heritage, his ability to walk back and forth between two cultures. Given choices of leadership practices at his disposal, Swimmer's task of building a foundation government for the Cherokee Nation afforded him a modicum of flexibility when using an authoritarian style of leadership.

The findings indicate that Swimmer, as a modern Chief of the Cherokees, was influenced by leadership characteristics from the traditional Native American, traditional Cherokee and the mainstream White cultures. The study's second question is addressed with a discussion of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics. Specifically, which traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics found in the data were used by Swimmer as a modern Principal Chief? The heading descriptions used are as found in the literature.

Harmony Centered

Chapman (interview participant) provided an example that Swimmer may or may not respond to negative comments in public about him (Swimmer) personally or a particular policy stance. Instead, the issue was discussed in private with trusted friends. Swimmer's behavior could be construed as harmony-centered, or adhering to the traditional way of withdrawing rather than creating confrontation.

Neil Morton (interview participant) mentioned a brief incident of Swimmer disrupting harmony. According to Morton, "Keeler always had a good relationship with the Keetoowahs. But, some of Ross Swimmer's employees caused a rift between the Keetoowahs and the Cherokee Nation. Keeler had made provisions for one of the rooms in the complex to be a Keetoowah room for their meetings. It still today has that plaque. When the restaurant was leased out to a private individual who did not allow the Keetoowahs to use the room to meet, Swimmer did not stick up for them." This event occurred during Swimmer's first administration. Morton explained that disagreements and mistakes happened in the procedural growth process, ending in divisions among the Cherokee people, divisions still seen today.

Significant Spiritual Component

Swimmer maintained he had a good relationship with the Keetoowahs. Swimmer stated:

I spent several nights at the Keetoowah stomp grounds near Vian [Oklahoma], which was operated by the Smith clan. They often asked me to speak after the stickball game and the meal. Margaret and I enjoyed the folks there, and would stay late in the night. I actually felt very close to the full-blood and traditional Cherokees, and spent a lot of time in the backwoods both campaigning and working on housing and health problems with them. The criticism about not paying attention to full-bloods was a political campaign issue of my opponents, who assumed, since I was ¼ degree, that I was not interested in the full-blood population. They simply did not know any better. (Ross Swimmer, personal email, 7-23-2008).

One mandate of the Keetoowah Society is protecting the spiritual knowledge of the Cherokees. The Keetoowahs have held, in secret, Cherokee traditional cultural knowledge since their formation in 1859.

As an active Episcopalian, whether or not Swimmer believed in or privately practiced any traditional Cherokee spiritual beliefs (although Swimmer did seek traditional Cherokee treatment for his cancer) is unknown. However, the data do demonstrate Swimmer's respect for the Cherokee spiritual leaders.

The Gene Leroy Hart story is presented as an example of Swimmer's display of respect for the Cherokee full-blood and Cherokee spirituality. The heading holds both the words "full-blood" and "spirituality," as they are inseparable.

The Gene Leroy Hart Story – Swimmer Respect for the Cherokee Full-Blood and Cherokee Spirituality

In 1977, Gene Leroy Hart, a full-blood Cherokee, was accused of the murder of three Girl Scouts in the Locust Grove area. As a full Oklahoma law enforcement

manhunt was underway, Hart sought refuge in the home of William Smith (a Cherokee spiritual leader), for protection under traditional Cherokee law. Swimmer stated, “The fellow that had been accused of that was in hiding down in the Cookson Hills. They finally tracked him down to a house owned by the Smiths. We had a tribal plane at the time, to use for travel to Oklahoma City. It’s just a local, small plane, but it would get us back and forth to places within a couple of hundred miles. So, I asked our pilot to go down to Fort Smith, and bring William back, instead of having him arrested and put in shackles.”

The following report was found in the October 14, 1978, Cherokee Council Minutes.

It was pointed out that Mr. Hart has been dubbed by the news media as a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. Gary Chapman made a motion that the Council approve the appropriation of \$12,500 for the attorneys of Gene Leroy Hart, to be used for defraying the cost of expert witnesses and trial transcripts in order that the allegations presented at trial can be determined to be true with the greatest degree of certainty as possible. In so doing, the Tribal Council takes no position on the guilt or innocence of Gene Leroy Hart, but asserts its desire that a fair trial be afforded. Second by Houston Johnson (Minutes of Council Meeting, October 14, 1978, Book 1, p. 82).

The data from the Council Minutes has shown the Council did not take action without the recommendation and approval of Swimmer. While the data do not show Swimmer’s leadership to employ traditional spiritual ways in his decision-making, the data do show that Swimmer did not disregard nor disrespect Cherokee traditional beliefs.

Cornsilk (interview participant) has a different perspective regarding why Swimmer would help the traditional Cherokee people. Cornsilk stated, “I’m not going to say that Ross doesn’t love the Cherokee people. I would never say that, because I don’t

think that someone who has contributed as much as he has could be loathsome to the Cherokees. I think that he does care, but I don't think that he is a Cherokee in the sense of being culturally Cherokee or even being able to understand Cherokee people." If Cornsilk's interpretation is correct, Swimmer would not have taken the aspect of Cherokee spirituality into consideration when helping William Smith or Gene Leroy Hart, as Swimmer would not have understood the part spirituality played in the holistic nature of traditional Cherokee thinking. The researcher has recently learned Swimmer's gesture of helping W. Smith and Gene Leroy Hart is not a commonly known story; or, if it is, the story is not circulated. Apparently, Swimmer did not promote his actions to his political advantage.

Consensus Ruled/Avoidance of Open Conflict

The traditional Cherokee leadership characteristic of ruling by consensus was brought into sharper focus by the findings, as opposed to the spiritual component, as more participant comments were made and inferences could be made from the documents. Often the interview participants' comments intermingled with avoidance of open conflict. The mixing of the two characteristics is found in Cornsilk's (interview participant) point of view.

I didn't see Ross Swimmer as being a reflection of what I was seeing in the communities – the respect for people's ideology and the desire to smooth conflict. If we are talking about traditional, culturally Cherokee meetings, if someone vocally disagrees with something, then everybody almost instantly goes into a conciliatory mode. Not necessarily giving up, but they go into this mode of, let's go have a cup of coffee; let's not talk about that right now; let's set that aside and we'll talk about something else we can all work on, and then we'll come back to that; rather than this fist-banging [Cornsilk is referring to observed behavior in Council meetings]. This is going to be the way it is. I'm the Chief. I was elected

to run this Tribe. You're elected to rubber-stamp – that was never said, but that was the impression I got as to how Ross handled the Council.

Ketcher (interview participant) commented that Swimmer worked all the time, mainly alone. “I think this was just his personality. He was not a real warm person. To me, he was hard to know. I never did get close to Ross. I never did have a conversation with him.”

Neil Morton (interview participant) emphasizes that Swimmer, rather than consulting with the communities, depended on the lieutenant system. Swimmer had a “lack of connection to the people. During the ten years Ross was Chief, there wasn't that much community focus.”

Mrs. Clarence Sunday (widow of former Councilman, Clarence Sunday) did believe a few people (lieutenants) had influence on Swimmer. However, in the place of group consensus, from Mrs. Sunday's perspective, Swimmer used a small group of “advisors.” In a rare statement regarding the time period of Swimmer's administration, Mrs. Sunday said, “Ross always called Clarence in for advice, and surely he did others that he had confidence in” (personal email, via her sister, Betty Jo Johnson, 4-16-2008).

In the traditional Cherokee practice of decision-making, all voices were heard until consensus was reached on a plan and forward direction. According to Patsy Morton (interview participant), “Swimmer couldn't sit down and talk with the traditional Cherokee, where everything is a negotiation. He didn't understand the give-and-take in the process of the traditional consensus process.” P. Morton continued, “His [Swimmer's] dad [Robert Swimmer] had taught him a lot of traditional ways. He

[Swimmer] never understood, but he tried. They [the traditional Cherokee men] teased him in the traditional way, and he didn't understand that.”

According to Cornsilk, the Cherokees would use a cultural practice of shunning in an effort to avoid open conflict. To keep a member of a group in line, “They’ll say, ‘Okay, you are just not a part of this group, and we’re just not going to talk to you right now. But, we’re not going to ignore your viewpoint. We are just not going to talk about it right now.’ So, there are two aspects of it – your contribution may stop at that moment; but, the discussion may start up later, and then you are welcomed to participate again. Ross would shun, but then that person was never allowed to come back in.”

Cornsilk’s (although mixed-blood, Cornsilk considers himself a culturally traditional Cherokee) comments are important when juxtaposed with Vaughn’s (a non-tribal member). Cornsilk views Swimmer through the lens of the traditional Cherokee. A majority of Cornsilk’s opinions and memories of Swimmer are critical, although Cornsilk gives credit to Swimmer where Swimmer’s accomplishments warrant credit. For example, Cornsilk related there were people in the full-blood communities “who really loved him [Swimmer] because of the fact the Tribe seemed to be growing.”

Vaughn (interview participant) analyzes Swimmer’s leadership characteristics and accomplishments from the lens of an Anglo-European-American, and they are interpreted differently from Cornsilk’s conclusions. From Vaughn’s perspective, “As I think in terms of the organization and management of the Nation, it seems to me that Chief Swimmer was more in a role of needing to make all of the decisions without a lot of input

from Tribal Council, because there was no instant communication available with all of those folks.”

The interviews of two men, David Cornsilk and Don Vaughn, having observed the same events, are excellent contrasts of the perspectives and perceptions of two opposing cultures: traditional Cherokee and Anglo-European-American. Events witnessed by several people and interpreted differently were demonstrated in “Akira Kurosawa’s film, *Rashomon*. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker” (Bolman & Deal, 2003. p. 17).

Political Authority Vested in the Community, Not the Individual

Porter theorizes, as a result of colonization, three types of governments have formed and are operating in Indian Country. One of the three, an Autonomous Constitutional Government (ACG), characterizes the Cherokee Nation. The foundation of the ACG is a written constitution. Porter suggests that, although the Cherokees resumed governmental autonomy in 1975, “dissonance exists between the existing governmental structure and the manner in which the People truly wish to govern themselves” (Porter, 1997, p. 83). Before removal, to survive, the Cherokee leaders had made the decision to change course regarding complete traditional governing toward the direction of adopting an American model of constitutional government. Perhaps Cornsilk’s interview comments detect an undercurrent of traditional Cherokee dissonance.

Self-Interest Sublimated in the Interests of the Community

The data do not indicate that Swimmer, as Principal Chief, promoted himself. After Swimmer resigned as Principal Chief of the Cherokees, his career path led to his nomination as head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to head of the Indian Trust for all federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States. Yet, Swimmer remains in the shadow of the press. *The Cherokee Advocate* quoted Mankiller: “Ross is the least political politician I have ever met. He is his own worst public relations agent. He rarely takes credit for his accomplishments, nor does he ever make decisions based solely on political decisions” (volume IX Number 10, October 1985, p. 13).

A second possible explanation is that Swimmer’s behavior points to the profile of a volunteer or public servant. For example, Swimmer stated, “In 1970, in talking to Keeler, I told him what I was doing, and said if there was something I could do to help, I would.”

In another instance, when Swimmer returned to Tulsa to practice law after leaving his position as head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, he maintained contact with both Steven Griles (Deputy Secretary of the Department of Interior) and Gale Norton (Secretary of the Interior) during the G. W. Bush administration. Swimmer was aware of the troublesome state of the National Indian Land Trust, a trust managed by the federal government on behalf of 500,000 American Indians and their heirs. The federal government is directly responsible for an accurate accounting of Indian land and the monies realized from their land. According to Swimmer, after learning of the dire

condition of the Trust, he wrote a note to Griles, and said, "If I can help you on the Trust, let me know."

Swimmer's motives to volunteer could be viewed as completely altruistic. Or, the motives could be assumed an attempt to promote himself. Or, they could be seen as a Cherokee cultural clan imperative to lead.

Swimmer's main objective did appear to be the building of the Cherokee government to support the increased welfare of its people. Swimmer's expectations of the newly elected Council to work in concert with him were toward taking a first step in understanding the people's needs. The expectations are addressed below:

Chief Swimmer outlined various duties of the Council, which included visiting with the people, finding out their needs, finding out or working out methods of satisfying these needs and desires, and that it was their duty to recognize that the needs of the people cannot be entirely satisfied. He stated that their being elected at large put them in a position of representing every Cherokee in the world. They could not be limited by county or state boundaries. He pointed out to them that they must recognize the Cherokee Nation as a whole, and that every Cherokee is entitled to share in the assets of the Cherokee Nation. He stated that it is our duty to represent the people in the best way we possibly can. He stated that he looked forward to the next three years toward their leadership (Minutes of Regular Meeting, December 4, 1976).

The data indicate that Swimmer's actions followed his word. From his first election in 1975, Swimmer was able to establish a small money flow; and, as that flow from Washington commenced, the funds were put to use in the communities for the betterment of the people.

Nine working committees were set up in 1977: the committees included (1) land; (2) social services; (3) executive; (4) personnel; (5) health; (6) registration; (7) economic

and industrial development; (8) roads; and (9) employment assistance (Minutes Of Regular Meeting, April 11, 1977, Book 1, p. 24).

Many traditional Cherokees were reluctant to enroll in the Nation for ideological reasons stemming from factional splits with various historical roots in politics and religion. But, Swimmer was continually pushing for increased Tribal enrollment. One possible purpose of Swimmer's encouragement of higher Tribal enrollment is explained in the following Council Meeting excerpt.

Councilman Morton [Patsy] asked [a] question concerning the funding criteria for education programs, and it was her understanding that many of the funds that the Tribe received are based on population, not degree of Indian blood. Chief Swimmer stated that the first thing that has to be established is that there be a need for any program; secondly, a determination is made on how many need the program, and every single program that the Tribe operates is based on population; the only ones that have a blood quantum requirement are the BIA-funded programs (Regular Council Meeting, March 10, 1984).

One interpretation of Swimmer's explanation is that more enrolled Cherokees meeting the blood quantum requirement of the BIA meant more help for the Cherokees.

Leaders Chosen Based on Competence

Cherokee leaders were chosen because of their demonstrated skills and abilities to meet the challenges facing the Cherokee people during different time periods. The data have shown Swimmer was chosen to be Principal Chief of the Cherokees based on his competence. Also, the researcher believes the data reflect that, once he had spoken, people could rely on Swimmer's word. Swimmer was adamant when he stated in our initial interview that he had to prove to the Cherokee people they were not wrong in electing him Principal Chief in 1975; as Swimmer indicated, he had only won by 27 percent of the vote. Additionally, Swimmer promised the Cherokee people they would

have a constitution, and he intended to keep his promise. Such forceful statements by Swimmer seem to indicate he was a man of his word.

Given the tenuous situation of the Cherokee Nation in 1975, when Ross Swimmer was elected Principal Chief, unique leadership skills were needed for an unusual situation. Keeler judged Ross Swimmer to be the right man at the right time to oversee the continued development of the Cherokee Nation and the protection of its people. Swimmer came to Tahlequah with the appropriate education, business experience, and ability to step back and forth between two cultures, Cherokee and Anglo-European-American. Situational Theory requires “a flexible response capability” (Hanson, 203, p. 149). While the foundational cultures co-existing in Tahlequah at the time had their effects on Swimmer’s leadership, in turn, Swimmer had the flexibility of reaching into those cultures for the leadership techniques necessary for applying to his decisions as a leader.

What was in W. W. Keeler’s mind in selecting Swimmer to follow Keeler as Principal Chief will never fully be known. However, according to Swimmer, Keeler said to him, “This is where we want the Tribe to go, and we think you can help take them there.” The data indicate that Keeler recognized the capacity of Swimmer to lead, and placed the responsibility of the Tribe’s future into the hands of the young, legally trained, Ross Swimmer, so that, once again, as with pre-Removal, the Cherokees could re-build a governmental foundation using the Anglo-European-American ways – Anglo-European-American ways well understood by Swimmer.

Led by Example Rather than Authority or Command

“I always said a compassionate dictator was better than a confused democracy. But I made good on my pledge of diluting the power of Principal Chief with the tribal council and court” (Ross Swimmer, personal email, August 6, 2004).

According to Cornsilk, “There was a perception handed down by Ross Swimmer that the Chief was the embodiment of the Tribe. That, if you oppose the policies of the Chief, then you are an enemy of the Tribe.” Both authority and power were given to Swimmer by the laws of the Cherokee Constitution. Executive power was vested in the Principal Chief. It is unclear, however, whether Swimmer originally fully understood the extent to which either his authority or power could be applied. Before the adoption of the Constitution, Swimmer did recognize that finding ways to access federal funds would be a “big impetus for the Nation to organize its government and adopt a new constitution” (Lemont, 2001, p. 6).

Lemont’s interview with Swimmer (September 4, 2000), reports Swimmer as stating the following:

When we adopted the constitution, I said it was more of a corporate document, a development authority. I mean our job was to improve lives. It wasn’t to create a government. I never envisioned having 2,000 or 3,000 people working for the government. I envisioned them working, and I always thought, at some point, we would reach a peak; and then we would start declining in employment because we would be able to say, “We have created the result that we want; people are working; we don’t need to be there any longer. We can have fewer social workers than we had yesterday” (Lemont, 2001, p. 25).

To the researcher, this particular traditional Cherokee leadership characteristic is somewhat confusing or misleading, as authority would automatically be granted to a leader chosen by the people. In reference to W. W. Keeler and Swimmer, however, Allen

(interview participant) said, “They were not leaders. They were government-elected officials.”

Swimmer stated, however, “Basically, I am not on the same wavelength with Indian leadership. A lot of it is because of my strong focus on results and empowerment, and not using tribal government as a patronage vehicle. I envisioned the Cherokee Nation as always being a very small government but having other organizations – businesses that are spun off from what the Tribe’s doing, building a job market, and helping people.”

Decisions Took Time; Their Word Was Binding

Swimmer was in a hurry to accomplish his goals, beginning with putting a new, updated, Cherokee Constitution in place. As discussed earlier, the Bureau of Indian Affairs told Swimmer that, until a constitutional form of government was put in place, the BIA would not perform services to the Cherokee people as a tribe (the BIA would continue to serve the Cherokee individual assessed by need).

By this directive, the BIA’s policy position continued the historical pattern of forcing Cherokee leadership to tilt their model of governing toward an Anglo-European-American institutional structure (Porter, 1997). By creating a corporate constitutional model, Swimmer was able to, over time, slowly crack the dam to congressional money so badly needed by the Tribe. However, in doing so, Swimmer complicated the relationship between the Cherokee Nation’s administration and the traditional Cherokee communities, as Anglo-European-American values were often at odds with the traditional Cherokees, their culture and their political values (Lemont, 2001).

More than likely, Swimmer's first encounters with the Bureau of Indian Affairs formed his dislike of the BIA as an institution. Swimmer stated, "The BIA is one of the worst organizations. I've never accepted the idea that, in a hierarchical organization, you have to stay with this line of authority. I went there in '85, with the idea that we ought to eliminate it. We're in this never-never world. It's either the BIA running it, or the Tribe running it, but neither one of them having the authority to make that decision."

Chapman (interview participant) remembered, in the beginning of Swimmer's administration, he was not taken seriously. When Swimmer and Chapman would make trips to D.C., to visit the BIA and various Congressmen, everyone would smile and say, "Well, here come the boys. Everyone thought we were a couple of smart boys, but were too young. We stumbled a lot, but were persistent. Finally, we would get what we needed."

Comparative Analysis of Swimmer’s Leadership Characteristics

Category I – Seven Swimmer Leadership Characteristics	Category II – Ten Traditional Cherokee Leadership Characteristics
1. Visionary	1. Harmony Centered
2. Goal Oriented	2. Significant Spiritual Component
3. Bureaucratic	3. Consensus Ruled
4. Top-Down	4. Avoidance of Open Conflict
5. Authoritarian	5. Political Authority Vested in the Community and not the Individual
6. Delegator	6. Self Interests Sublimated in the Interest of the Community
7. Communicator	7. Leaders Chosen Based on Competence
	8. Led by Example Rather than Authority or Command
	9. Decisions Took Time
	10. Their Word was Binding

The seven leadership characteristics of Swimmer listed in Category I are readily located and discussed in Bass and Stodgill’s (1981) seminal book on leadership. These characteristics reflect hallmarks of what the Western world understands as typical leadership characteristics in today’s Anglo-European-American worldview. They are non-traditional, and they are “modern.” However, to accomplish his goals, Swimmer was not constrained in his thinking or actions. Swimmer, as he chose to utilize them, had the advantage of a second established pool of leadership characteristics at his disposal. As a leader and the product of two worldviews, Swimmer was advantaged with an increased number of leadership practices.

Swimmer's bricolage approach of using leadership principles from traditional Cherokee leadership practices and from Anglo-European-American established leadership customs provided him flexibility and depth – Swimmer was not limited to Anglo-European-American principles, solely, as tools of leadership to problem-solve. Leadership options available to him increased.

The foundation of traditional Cherokee leadership rests on harmony and community consensus. The data indicate that, while the communities approved the majority of Swimmer's decisions, actions and results, approval was followed by criticism of the way he "went about doing things." As a rule, Swimmer did not make decisions by consensus, and harmony was disturbed.

Swimmer came to lead the Cherokee people in a time of crisis. The Cherokee were in a state of disunity; there was no money, and Swimmer was fearful the Nation could not and would not survive. In order to unite the people, build a government, find money to establish programs in order to provide basic health care, education and jobs, Swimmer made unilateral decisions, bypassing consensus; and at times, he acted quickly to stay in front of the federal government's Indian policies.

Keeler chose Swimmer as his replacement for Principal Chief based on competence. Swimmer was not immune from mistakes, however. When errors were made, Swimmer was frank in publicly disclosing his mistakes, and corrections were made. Swimmer practiced full disclosure. The data indicate, when Swimmer gave his word to the people, his word was binding.

The employment by Swimmer of the seven leadership characteristics in Category I is established by the data. However, there is inconsistency with Swimmer's use of traditional Cherokee leadership practices. The data indicate Swimmer did sublimate his self-interest for the betterment of the Cherokee community at large. However, he did not include the community in the majority of his decisions. Political authority did not appear to be vested in the community. However, the researcher is reluctant to make definite conclusions regarding Swimmer's complete rejection of the use of traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics. This study is initial research of Swimmer's leadership characteristics. Existing research on the topic for comparison does not exist. Given Swimmer's leadership successes by his ability to understand the worldviews of two different cultures, and given his natural skills of being able to apply leadership choices from two separate paradigms, the researcher suggests more attention be given to the study of leadership with this added component – leaders with the genetic and cultural unique option of applying expanded worldviews to their particular situations of leadership.

Question 3 – *The Extent of Swimmer's Accomplishments*

The *Cherokee Columns*, written by Chief Swimmer, indicated that Swimmer made a continuous and concentrated effort to explain his policy actions to the Cherokee People. Swimmer's apparent vacillation to often move in one direction or not move at all caused confusion, and generated nasty gossip and ill will. Chief Swimmer was often the target of a negative rumor mill.

Internally, the Tribe was socially, politically and culturally fragmented from less than desirable interactions with non-Cherokee people and interests. Communication was

difficult, as the traditional Cherokee population lived in remote communities not easily accessible due to poor road conditions and the lack of power lines for telephone service. Typically, this portion of the Cherokee population came into Tahlequah on Saturdays for supplies and news, which was then carried back to their communities for dissemination. This method of communication could be skewed to Swimmer's disadvantage.

Swimmer would frequently attempt to counter these rumors by explaining his actions and policies through use of the *Cherokee Columns* as a tool of educational dissemination. For example, a definition of "plenary power" was given by Swimmer in one *Cherokee Column*, in an effort to educate the Tribe about Swimmer's limitation as Principal Chief.

Congress has plenary power over Indians and Tribal governments. Plenary power has been described as that power which a huge person has over a small bug. Always ready to pounce or stomp, but being permissive to the extent of leaving the bug alone as long as it was bothering no one. In other words, Indians are at the mercy of Congress, the President and the Supreme Court (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume IV Number 8, October, 1980, p. 3).

Interestingly, John Ketcher (interview participant) believes communication to still be a problem in the Cherokee Nation today. In discussing problematic communication in 1975 and 1976, from Swimmer to the traditional communities, the researcher mentioned to Ketcher that Swimmer was making an effort to reach the communities through the *Cherokee Columns*. Ketcher replied, "We are still having trouble with that kind of communication. We are now sending out free newspapers to households, and we are still finding that people, even though they get it, are not reading it. They are just not keeping up."

During his interviews, Swimmer did not speak directly to learning from his visits to Cherokee communities. However, the development of jobs, health clinics and educational programs for the Cherokee people did remain Swimmer's foremost goals. Swimmer's method of making unilateral decisions, rather than the grass-roots perception of listening to all Cherokee voices allowing for consensus, seemed to be the primary point of contention among the traditional Cherokees in Swimmer's leadership style. Cornsilk stated, "He [Swimmer] did good things. But how he went about them [Cornsilk stopped to collect his thoughts] – I think one of the perceptions that I picked up on – not necessarily from me, but just from listening to some of the full-bloods that I talked to and some of the people who are more Cherokee cultural – was that Ross treated people in a condescending way." Cornsilk's comment was reflective of the interview participants more influenced by the traditional Cherokee worldview. While begrudgingly giving credit to Swimmer for a multitude of accomplishments, a shadow of distrust overlay the obvious improvements made to their lives by the efforts of Swimmer as Principal Chief. Cornsilk commented, "It appeared that Swimmer used unilateral decisions based on political survival – a kind of decision-making that Ross used in emergency situations. Whenever it looked like the house was on fire, he didn't wait for anybody to get the hose; he went and got it himself."

Don Vaughn describes the structure of the Cherokee Nation when he was first employed, 1980:

I think Swimmer was very important in laying the foundation for the future growth of the Cherokee Nation. The Constitution was barely five years old, and a centralized structure was beginning to develop within the Nation. We still use that same centralized structure today. The basic systems of a centralized financial

system, a centralized acquisition management system, and a centralized human resource system were put in place during Swimmer's time. The Cherokee Nation was a much smaller organization at that time, and more dependent on the federal government. But, the structure was being laid down to allow for a lot of future growth and development for the Nation. So, I really think he [Swimmer] had a major impact – role – in some of that structure that would lead to essentially where the Cherokee Nation is today.

Vaughn continued, "Today, we still use a centralized financial system, a centralized acquisition management system, a centralized human resource system. These basic systems were put in place during [Swimmer's] time." Richard Allen (interview participant) remarked on the phenomenal growth of the Cherokee Nation in a short time period. Allen continued, "I think people tend to forget. In 1975, with a Chief [Swimmer] who had to implement protocol for the election of a Tribal Council – and, then the Court system was initiated – we've only been in existence, piecemeal, just a little over thirty years."

The voices of interview participants John Ketcher and Neil Morton contributed to the recognized efforts and effects of Swimmer's leadership. According to Ketcher, "I think he [Swimmer] was a pretty good organizer in getting his people in the offices to work. He made some choices that I wouldn't agree with. But, on the whole, I think he did a pretty good job." N. Morton added, "He [Swimmer] established an identity for the Tribe – both locally, regionally, and nationally. Very positive recognition of the Tribe."

In a *Cherokee Advocate* interview, 1985, W. Mankiller, Deputy Chief of the Cherokee Nation, stated that, under Swimmer's leadership, "Thousands of Cherokees have received health, education, housing, environmental health, registration, employment training and social services from the Cherokee Nation" (p. 13). Moreover, the strength of

Swimmer's leadership benefited the entirety of northeastern Oklahoma. Continuing, Mankiller stated, Swimmer, advocating "tribal independence from the federal government . . . increased the Cherokee Nation's assets from \$9 million in 1975, to \$34 million in 1985" (*Cherokee Advocate*, Volume IX Number 10, p. 13, 1985).

Reminiscing in his last interview, Swimmer stated,

I was privileged to be there at the beginning, and truly believe what I was able to do was build the foundation for the Tribe to grow on. We did establish all the trappings of a government. [Pausing to collect his thoughts, Swimmer continued to elaborate.] "We brought a hospital to the Cherokee people that was desperately needed. I was pleased we were able to build the new building out at the Tribal Complex. We put an infrastructure in place – the bureaucracy, as somebody called it. We got our old historic buildings back. Also, during my time, we established a health care plan for the Cherokee Nation. We turned the economy of the Tribe around, with the Cherokee Nation Industries becoming a multi-million-dollar industry. We saw so many benefits from the Bell Community self-help project in terms of lower alcoholism, better education, improved school attendance. These are the kind of things we put in place during that ten years.

Mindful of the importance of symbols to the Cherokee Tribe, Swimmer was able to accomplish the return of the old Cherokee National Capitol Building, Old Jail, and the Supreme Court Building. According to Mooney (interview participant), archivist, the Supreme Court building was "antebellum, 1844, the Capitol and jail are c. 1867. The Cherokee National Capitol building stood on the site which had served as the meeting place for the Cherokee Government since their arrival in Indian Territory" (United States Department of the Interior, p. 2). When Oklahoma became a state, 1907, the Cherokee National Council lost its power as a lawmaker, and the building became the property of Cherokee County.

In another move to protect Tribal heritage and history, Swimmer stopped the Bureau of Indian Affairs from "the removal of the records of the Cherokee Tribe from

Muskogee to the Fort Worth, Texas depository. Chief Swimmer stated that these records date back to pre-statehood and they are of tribal value, they include land records, Dawes commission records. Chief Swimmer stated that he feels that if these records are removed from Muskogee, that the Tribe many never see them again” (Regular Council Meeting, December 10, 1983). According to Gardner (1993), adept leaders are guardians of symbols.

By 1983, Cherokee Nation Industries at Stilwell, Oklahoma, employed 180 persons at an annual payroll of \$1,750,000 (*Commemorative Book 31st Annual Cherokee Nation Holiday, August 31 – September 5, 1983*).

Willing to laugh at himself and admit a mistake, Swimmer shared his last thought to end the interview.

I think one of the most significant events happened at the last Council meeting I attended – I vetoed gaming. I said, “I don’t want our Tribe getting involved in gaming.” I didn’t see it as the wave of the future. It was just bingo. Apparently, I was wrong. When I left, within the year, the Council passed it again. Wilma signed it, and we got into high-stakes bingo; and then, of course, expanded into the machines and began to build the casinos. The Tribe today is a complex entity. It’s a multi-hundred-million-dollar industry. They bring in over a quarter of a billion dollars in gaming revenue. The fun part about being Chief today is you have opportunity. Back then, we were scratching for every dime we could get. There’s a lot of opportunity now to do things out there in the rural parts of Oklahoma.

Swimmer’s accomplishments during his ten-year service as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation are partially summarized and found in the Appendices, listed as Appendix A (*Commemorative Book: 31st Annual Cherokee National Holiday August 31 September 5, 1983, p. 33*).

Summary

Searching the data to find Swimmer's leadership characteristics, a lens of bricolage was used to construct a discussion of three emergent themes, which, in part, continue to provide partial understanding to the ten-year period of Ross Swimmer's leadership of the modern Cherokee Nation. These primary themes are: (1) cultural influences; (2) Swimmer's leadership characteristics (both non-traditional and traditional); and (3) Swimmer's accomplishments as Principal Chief. Sub-themes appear in the findings, providing interest and color to the story of a leader about whom so little is known. Swimmer's bricolage approach of using leadership principles from traditional Cherokee leadership practices, and then from Anglo-European-American established leadership customs, adds interesting texture to the discussion of his leadership strategies.

Included in Chapter V are overviews of Swimmer's first, second and third terms in office, Swimmer's 1976 Constitution, Swimmer's focus on community self-sufficiency, and his diagnosis of cancer. Seven Swimmer leadership characteristics emerged from the data and were placed in a single category. Data support these leadership characteristics, and are presented from both a positive and a counterbalancing negative perspective. According to Deloria (1988), Indians "rarely box themselves into a position. Rather, they always have such flexibility that they can change positions overnight and appear to be entirely consistent" (p. 219). Additionally, the full compliment of ten traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics is discussed using examples from the data as applied to Swimmer. The traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics formed a second category.

The third Swimmer myth (spending more time at the bank instead of working for the Cherokee people) was appropriately placed in Chapter V, as the myth developed after Swimmer's election in 1975. The third major theme, Swimmer's accomplishments as Principal Chief, is addressed and ends Chapter V.

The two categories of leadership form the response to Questions 1 and 2 of the study. The third theme, accomplishments, addresses Question 3 of the study: From a tribal perspective did Swimmer's accomplishments make a difference? The study's final chapter, VI, connects the findings from Chapters IV and Chapter V to the questions; conclusions are drawn. Last, recommendations for further research are presented.

CHAPTER VI

Summary Of Findings, Conclusions, And Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter VI provides a brief overview of the purpose of the study, its design, and the research methods applied to the collection and analysis of data. A summary of the research findings is presented. Swimmer's seven identified leadership characteristics are featured in a diagram under the overarching influences of two foundational cultures: Cherokee, and Anglo-European-American. The diagram also addresses the similarities/differences of Swimmer's leadership accomplishments compared to their affinity/non-affinity with traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics as supported by the data. Six interview participant statements are given as examples of the extent of Swimmer's effectiveness from a Tribal perspective. Based upon the study findings, conclusions are presented. The researcher's recommendations for further research are discussed. Current information and concluding thoughts on Ross O. Swimmer end the manuscript.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this case study was to examine the leadership characteristics of a modern leader of the Cherokee Nation, Ross O. Swimmer, during his three elections as the Principal Chief, 1975-1985. Few historians or researchers paid scholarly attention to the Cherokee Tribe after the break-up of its lands and institutions as a result of the federal Indian policy of Allotment. By Oklahoma statehood in 1907, the position of the federal government was that the Cherokee no longer existed. For an almost seventy-year period

of time, no form of Cherokee leadership was *visible*. According to Lemont (2001), “From 1907 through 1970, the Cherokee Nation functioned without a government” (p. 6). Buchanan (1972) postulated that, “The Cherokees had not, in fact, disappeared after statehood, but continued to comprise a recognizable society – one that currently numbered 10,000 persons” (p. 2). The *invisible*, or untold, story of the Cherokee Tribe is one of survival. A purpose of this study was to begin filling in gaps of missing information on modern Cherokee leadership.

With no evidence of overt Cherokee leadership for seventy years, the federal government changed Indian policy course again by allowing the Cherokee Nation the right to reorganize and elect their Principal Chief. The first elected Principal Chief was W. W. Keeler (1971-1975). Ross O. Swimmer followed Keeler (1975) and embraced Keeler’s goals of re-unifying the Cherokee people, re-organizing the Cherokee Nation, and bringing the Cherokee people into the modern world.

Swimmer – by blood-quantum, one-quarter Cherokee, and raised in the White mainstream culture of Oklahoma City – was considered an “outsider” by the Cherokee people. During his formative years, Swimmer was only periodically exposed to traditional Cherokee culture. Since Swimmer was handpicked by Keeler as his (Keeler’s) successor, and was not chosen by the traditional method of grass-roots community consensus, Swimmer was considered the first non-traditional leader of the Cherokee Nation. What leadership characteristics would define Swimmer? This question was the crux of this study’s examination.

Research Design and Procedures

A case study of whether Swimmer's leadership followed a traditional Cherokee perspective, blended traditional leadership characteristics with Anglo-European-American theories of leadership, or whether he completely modernized his leadership characteristics to emulate a selected Anglo-European-American leadership theory, was of research interest. Of equal importance was the missing voice of an American Indian leader on leadership theory - a voice needing to be heard and included in the academic body of work on leadership.

Brayboy (2006) cites Battiste (2002, p. 5): "Eurocentric thinkers dismissed indigenous knowledge in the same way they dismissed any socio-political cultural life they did not understand: they found it to be unsystematic and incapable of meeting the productivity needs of the modern world" (Brayboy, p. 430). Because the Cherokee people have not only survived but are thriving, this researcher suggests there are characteristics and qualities of leadership held and practiced by Ross O. Swimmer that are of value and worthy of study.

Qualitative research methods were used in the process of collecting data for the study. These methods included open-ended interviews, participative observation, and document analyses (Merriam, 2002). Of particular value and credibility to the study was the information given and stories told by the Cherokee participants. Brayboy clearly makes the point of the importance of the Indian story.

I once had an encounter with a colleague who told me that people like me "told good stories," and later added that, because I told good stories, I might not ever be a "good theorist." I was struck by the seeming disconnect between community stories, and personal narratives and "theory." After this encounter with my

colleague, I returned home to Prospect, North Carolina, one of the communities of the Lumbee Tribe of which I am an enrolled member, and told several of my relatives and elders about my colleagues' comments. My mother told me, "Baby, doesn't she know that our stories are our theories? And she thinks she's smarter than you because she can't tell stories?" (Brayboy, B.M.J., 2006, p. 426).

According to Brayboy, Indian stories are not separate from theory; they are real, "legitimate sources of data and ways of being" (Brayboy, 2006, 430).

Purposeful sampling was used to select the interview participants for the case study. The sample was small. However, the researcher's principal aim was to find willing participants with the following characteristics: (1) the interview participants were living during the time period of interest; (2) the interview participants were involved in the administrations of either W. W. Keeler and/or Ross O. Swimmer; (3) the interview participants were personal friends of either W. W. Keeler and/or Ross O. Swimmer; and, (4) a variety of interview participants was selected by the researcher to represent either a negative, positive or neutral assessment of Ross Swimmer's leadership. Their position on Swimmer's leadership performance was stated in the researcher's initial query of their interest to participate in the study. The researcher sought this mix in an attempt to achieve a balance. "In purposeful sampling, the size of the sample is determined by information considerations [not statistical considerations]" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 202).

The researcher believes a representative balance was achieved. All interview participants spoke of Swimmer's leadership characteristics and his achievements from their perspectives, which covered a spectrum from traditional Cherokee to an Anglo-European-American leaning. As outliers, more criticism of Swimmer was heard from a

participant with inclinations toward the traditional paradigm of Cherokee governing. In contrast, highly positive, detailed outcomes of Swimmer's leadership came from the memories of a non-Tribal interview participant. Interestingly, a feature of the remaining participants was a criticism tempered with an offsetting positive remark about Swimmer's leadership. This method of the Cherokee communicating information is possibly an example of the Cherokee way of maintaining harmony and balance; or, as Deloria (1988) observed, in verbal discourse, an Indian does not allow themselves to be "boxed in."

One participant informed me that she would have nothing good to say about Swimmer, and only agreed to be interviewed if Swimmer's name was never mentioned during the interview. The researcher agreed to the participant's request, and was rewarded with several rich, detailed stories of the participant's experiences with W. W. Keeler. This particular participant's position was reflected in Buchanan's observation (1972): "These people [Cherokees] take each issue as it comes, study it carefully and slowly, decide the best course of action privately, and then stick with that decision" (p. 20). A Cherokee Nation archivist provided a fulcrum of neutrality. While he was ever ready to provide research help when needed, he remained in his comfort zone by not offering his opinions on Swimmer's leadership characteristics.

Two interviews were conducted with Ross Swimmer, for a total of eight hours. Margaret Swimmer did participate in the first interview. She was not present during the second. The length of the interviews was determined by redundancy of information heard by the researcher. For example, after eight hours of Swimmer interviews, the

information became recursive. All interview participants gave permission to use their real names in the study.

Access to a ten-year publication of the Cherokee newspapers, *The Cherokee Nation News*, the *Cherokee Voices*, and the *Cherokee Advocate*, was made possible by the generous lending of copies to the researcher by the Swimmers from their personal library. The *Cherokee Column*, written weekly by Swimmer for the newspapers, was particularly insightful in gaining knowledge of Swimmer's leadership characteristics.

Additionally, as Cherokees became aware of the current study, offers were voluntarily made by numerous Tribal members to share documents with the researcher. The data was either mailed or handed to the researcher in person. According to Deloria (1988), "Sharing, [is] the great Indian tradition" (p. 122). All material accordingly, was returned to the owner(s).

Aside from trips made to Tulsa, Bartlesville, and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, for interviews, trips were also made to the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, to view Swimmer's policy papers. Copies were made of the Minutes of Council meetings held during Swimmer's terms as Principal Chief. The Minutes are housed in the Council House, located in the Cherokee Nation complex.

When physical trips were not possible, the researcher made numerous phone calls or sent emails to interview participants, attempting to fill in missing pieces of information or track down a lead generated by an intriguing comment. Often, the person making the comment claimed no further knowledge, but offered the name of a Cherokee citizen who might be able to answer the question(s). The result, more phone calls. Gathering "bits

and pieces” of information from the Cherokee is a life-long project. In the interest of time and maintaining a boundary on the study questions, the researcher had to reluctantly make a decision to forego intriguing leads, and concentrate on the data from the interviews, documents and personal observations.

After the data was gathered and the interview tapes transcribed, read, re-read and coded for themes and patterns, Stakes’ (1995) four steps of data analysis were applied in an effort to make sense of the information: (1) categorical aggregation; (2) direct interpretation; (3) consistency, and (4) naturalistic generalization. The methodology utilized by the researcher provided a guide to exploring the questions posed by the study.

Summary: Discussion of the Research Questions Guiding the Study

The questions guiding this study were:

1. What were the leadership characteristics of Principal Chief, Ross O. Swimmer?
2. To what extent did these leadership characteristics reflect traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics?
3. From a tribal perspective, did these make a difference? To what extent?

Leadership characteristics of Ross O. Swimmer

Seven Swimmer leadership characteristics emerged from the data. Swimmer was a visionary leader and goal-oriented. Tasked with rebuilding the government of the Cherokee Nation, Swimmer created a corporate institutional model of government, and wrote a Cherokee Constitution, using as a template the Constitution of the United States.

Swimmer set in motion a bureaucratic, top-down model of government, which was in disaccord with the traditional Cherokee communities' ethos of less quick action.

Swimmer was time-pressed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to have a constitution in place in order to receive money from the federal government as a federally recognized Tribe. As quick action and quick decisions were required, Swimmer was viewed as authoritative. However, as Swimmer's re-building goals proceeded, he was described by the interview participants, and presented by the data, as a leader who delegated tasks.

Clearly, Swimmer understood the importance of communication and became a skilled communicator. However, his preferred method of communication was written rather than oral. The data indicate, with Swimmer's initial foray into public speaking through campaigning, he was uncomfortable. However, from the comments of several interview participants, Swimmer eventually became a "mesmerizing" public speaker. It was through Swimmer's written essays to the Cherokee people that clear, educational, impassioned communication was discovered. Perhaps Swimmer's comfort with the pen came from his legal training. Swimmer admitted that he was not a "people person." Small talk did not seem to be a natural strength, whereas person-to-person "small talk," to the Cherokee, is the most common and enjoyable form of communication.

W. W. Keeler selected Swimmer to be Chief of the Cherokees at a critical time in the Tribe's history. A leader with the appropriate skills was needed to pull a fractured people together, find money, and build a government in order to hopefully assure their survival. The circumstances required quick action and firm, unilateral decision-making. The situation produced an authoritative leader. Whether or not this characteristic is

natural to Swimmer as a leader, or whether the attribute emerged due to the circumstances in the Cherokee Nation, is unknown. A comparative study of Swimmer's leadership characteristics after he resigned as Principal Chief and became head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and then became head of the Indian Land Trust, would be necessary to answer this question.

Summary: Extent to which Swimmer's Leadership Characteristics Reflect Traditional Cherokee Leadership Characteristics

The data indicate Ross Swimmer used a combination of traditional Cherokee, traditional Native American (public servant, as an example), and Anglo-European-American leadership characteristics during his three terms as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Two possible explanations for Swimmer's blending leadership characteristics from varying models were suggested. First, Swimmer, while raised primarily in the White world, was exposed to traditional Cherokee culture as a child. Second, according to Strickland (1982), adaptability has always been a unique characteristic of the Cherokee people. Cherokee leaders frequently applied the feature of borrowing from White culture in order to adapt and survive. Given his bi-cultural heritage, Swimmer could navigate back and forth between the mainstream White culture and the traditional Cherokee culture, to pick and choose various types of leadership characteristics suited to the situation at hand.

The second question is of interest, as Cherokee leadership was traditional until the final dissolving of the Cherokee Nation at Oklahoma statehood. There were no non-traditional leaders until W. W. Keeler, and Keeler was considered Cherokee by the Cherokee people. Swimmer was viewed by the Cherokee people as the first non-

traditional Chief of the Cherokees of modern times. Patsy Morton (interview participant) commented that, “He [Swimmer] came in at a time when there hadn’t been a Chief in so long, he had to take a forceful attitude.”

The researcher was curtailed by the limited amount of published research focused on Native American leadership characteristics. As the focus was narrowed to the Cherokee specifically (or any single Indian tribe), research information became quite scant. The leadership characteristics found for Cherokee leaders, in all probability, is not a complete assessment. The researcher relied on Cherokee leadership characteristics presented by Spindler and Spindler (1957); Buchanan (1972), and Persico (1981). Several of Swimmer’s leadership characteristics, as described by some interview participants, were found listed in the literature as traditional Native American characteristics rather than traditional Cherokee characteristics. Spindler and Spindler point out that, while tribes differ, there are characteristics common or widely shared. As these traditional ways would appear in the data, they would soon be contradicted by other Swimmer actions.

Existing in tandem with the multiplicity of two cultural pools of leadership characteristics available to Swimmer to voluntarily draw from was a separate situation of these same cultural pools competing and exerting, independently, their influence on Swimmer. Surrounded by strong social and political cultural forces with demands from different worldviews, Swimmer needed to remain focused on his goals. (Swimmer was described “aloof” by some interview participants), centered, and with no experience as a leader to be open to seeking advice. The data show that Swimmer did ask advice from

elders. What is not clear from the data is the role and extent Keeler played as an advisor to Swimmer. According to Swimmer, Keeler helped to push through the approval of the Constitution in Washington, D. C. There was no further mention of Keeler.

Brayboy's Thoughts on Blending Knowledge

Rather than blending selected aspects of established Anglo-European-American leadership theories to accommodate an American Indian leadership style, or bending an American Indian leadership style to fit into an existing academic leadership theory, Brayboy (2006) suggests a blending of knowledge. Brayboy defines knowledge “as the ability to recognize change, adapt, and move forward with the change” (p. 434). Brayboy theorizes knowledge, as defined, includes three forms of knowledge: (1) cultural knowledge, with its attendant meaning of “understanding what it means to be a member of a particular tribal nation” (p. 434); (2) survival knowledge, which means an understanding “of how and in what ways change can be accomplished, and the ability and willingness to change, adapt and adjust in order to move forward as an individual and community” (p. 434-435); and (3) academic knowledge “acquired from educational institutions” (p. 435). Brayboy hypothesizes that indigenous cultural knowledge and academic knowledge do not need to be in disharmony. Instead, they can blend and compliment, creating knowledge of survival (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2004; Deloria, 1970; Medicine, 2001).

Brayboy's thinking is useful in the study of Swimmer's leadership characteristics. Understanding the three forms of Brayboy's definition of knowledge introduces new thoughts, leading to a possible explanation of and insight into the duality of Swimmer's

leadership stands and behaviors, where, at certain times, he would make demands from the top of a hierarchy; at other times, Swimmer would request input from the communities in order to further his goals of strengthening the communities. Brayboy's theory of knowledge blending is useful when used in partnership with Swimmer's bricolage leadership approach and his governing decisions.

Summary: From a Tribal Perspective, the Extent to which Swimmer's Leadership Characteristics Made a Difference

Swimmer brought all seven of his identified leadership characteristics together in an effort to begin the historical task of rebuilding the Cherokee Nation, and to face the challenges confronting the Cherokee people in a rapidly changing world. The list of his accomplishments is lengthy. After the passage of the Constitution, Swimmer put in place the basic systems of a centralized financial system, acquisition management system, and centralized human resource system. The Nation's finances were straightened out and able to pass a rigorous yearly audit by a certified public accounting firm. The administrative offices became computerized. The ground under this institutional framework provided strength for a foundation on which a health care plan was established and implemented throughout the Cherokee communities, and the development of businesses, which created jobs for Cherokee people.

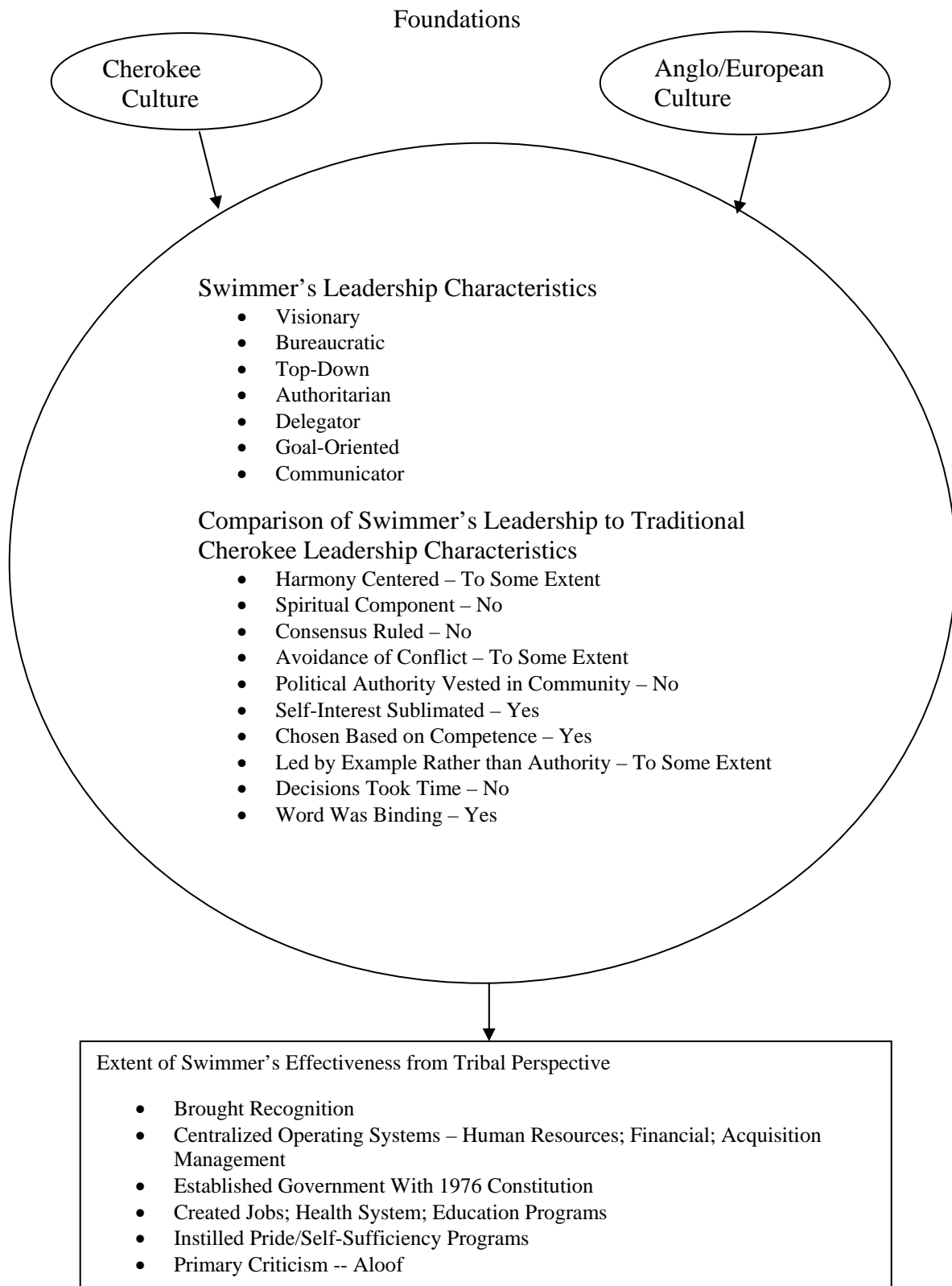
Swimmer faced a huge task in rebuilding the Nation's educational system. Before Oklahoma statehood, the Cherokees, "using bilingual teachers and Cherokee texts, controlled a school system which produced a tribe almost 100% *literate* [emphasis added] . . . the literacy level in English of western Oklahoma Cherokees was higher than the white populations of either Texas or Arkansas" (Spring, 1994, p. 26). In 1976, Cherokee

education was facing a multitude of deficiencies. One meeting called to discuss solutions found educators explaining to Swimmer the need for training teachers working with Indian children, and that children were “entering school speaking neither good Cherokee or good English” (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9 Number 17, April 23, 1976, p. 1). Swimmer indicated that the rural community schools were not supported by a tax base sufficient to provide enough money for school construction or proper staffing. Further, Swimmer stated, “The Tribe was not able to operate their own schools because they had no taxing authority, as they did have in the 1800s” (*The Cherokee Nation News*, Volume 9 Number 17, April 23, 1976, p. 1). The education system improved as the Tribe’s budget increased.

In the late 1960s, with the seed money start of two million dollars (referred to as the “residual funds” left from winning their case in the Indian Claims Commission), W. W. Keeler and one employee began to formulate a plan to rebuild a Cherokee government. Keeler brought Ross Swimmer into the building process in the early 1970s, with Swimmer’s election as Principal Chief in 1975; within ten years, remarkable progress was made in improving the lives of the Cherokee people.

The following diagram pictorially summarizes the two prominent cultural foundations affecting the leadership years of Swimmer: Cherokee culture and Anglo-European-American culture. Seven leadership characteristics emerged from the data, reflecting how the Anglo-European culture influenced Swimmer’s style. Following are listed the ten traditional Cherokee characteristics of leadership which do not directly reflect Swimmer’s leadership style. The lack of a direct connection to Swimmer’s

leadership characteristics, when compared to traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics, might be explained due to the context in which he was raised and the crisis state of the Cherokee Nation at the time Keeler chose Swimmer to lead. While not completely abandoning the old Cherokee traditional ways of governing, Swimmer recognized the need to strongly incorporate Anglo methods of governing in order for the Tribe to survive. Therefore, Swimmer could be considered a transitional leader – one representing a bridge between two theories of leadership: traditional to modern. Brief interview participant statements are given as examples of the extent of Swimmer's effectiveness from a Tribal perspective. A discussion follows the diagram.



When Swimmer became Principal Chief of the Cherokee, he faced two major problems: the internal political problems of tribal factionalism and two primary, opposing, competing cultures existing side-by-side in Tahlequah, Oklahoma – the dominant Anglo-European-American, and the traditional Cherokee culture. Swimmer would build a third institutional culture, the bureaucratic structure of the Cherokee Nation.

The diagram presented above lists the leadership characteristics of Swimmer found emerging from the data. Seven characteristics appeared: (1) visionary; (2) bureaucratic; (3) top-down; (4) authoritarian; (5) delegator; (6) goal-oriented; and (7) communicator.

Only the Cherokee leadership characteristics, located in the limited amount of source material available, were used in the study. When appearing in the participant interviews or located in the historical documents, an indication was given by a “no” or “to some extent,” whether or not the traditional Cherokee leadership characteristics were found to be characteristics of Swimmer’s leadership style. Six examples are taken from participant interviews and used to reflect the extent of Swimmer’s leadership effectiveness from a Tribal perspective.

The diagram suggests the worldviews of opposing cultures have an influence on leadership. The study’s data do indicate, upon Swimmer’s election as Chief of the Cherokees, he arrived as an unknown quantity to the Cherokees, was considered an outsider to the community, was perceived as already aligned with the White cultural

establishment, and began his administration by organizing the Nation around familiar Anglo-European-American ways of governing.

Summary: Discussion of Findings Related to Current Leadership Theories

As Swimmer was the first non-traditional Principal Chief (the researcher does not define W. W. Keeler as a non-traditional Chief because many of the interview participants spoke of Keeler as a cultural Cherokee) in the history of the Cherokee Nation, attempting to fit Swimmer into discrete foundational leadership characteristics of either traditional Cherokee or Anglo-European-American is too orderly. Swimmer had the capacity to use one characteristic in a particular situation, and to follow that example by an unexpected absence of that characteristic in another. This expanded dimension of leadership is possibly due to Swimmer's unique heritage, his ability to walk back and forth between two cultures. Given choices of leadership practices at his disposal, Swimmer's task of building a foundation government for the Cherokee Nation afforded him a modicum of flexibility when using an authoritarian style of leadership.

Brayboy ponders the quandary of the inclusion of American Indian leadership into the dominant leadership theories by adding another dimension to Swimmer's leadership style which introduces an aspect of blending knowledge (discussed earlier). Brayboy surmises that analyzing the American Indian world (Cherokee included) is compromised by the fact that standard theoretical frames (such as Bourdieu, Fordham, and Willis) do not "explicitly address issues that are salient for and to American Indians" (Brayboy, 2006, p. 427). This is not to say that certain aspects of Swimmer's leadership characteristics did not appear in various Anglo-European-American theories of

leadership. They did. However, since Swimmer's leadership characteristics are not found in every leadership model previously discussed, comparison between Swimmer's leadership characteristics to the standard leadership theories discussed in current academic research is not completely satisfactory.

For example, traits held by Swimmer (legal knowledge, business experience, physical energy) and observed by then Principal Chief W. W. Keeler, led Keeler to support Swimmer's nomination as Principal Chief in 1975. The data suggests Keeler's decision was not in keeping with how Cherokee community members typically chose their leaders. However, the data do not provide evidence of whether or not Keeler consulted various community leaders prior to his decision. What is surmised from this study is that Keeler made a unilateral decision.

A key component of the "Great Man" theory holds that one's rise to a leadership position occurs by right of birth. Swimmer did not fit this definition because both he and the Cherokee people considered him to be an "outsider" to the Tahlequah area, and the culture, by the traditional Cherokee population.

Trait Theory and Situational Leadership Theory (the third theory discussed below) provide frameworks for viewing the situation faced by Swimmer. Bass and Stogdill state: "The qualities, characteristics, and skills required in a leader are determined, to a large extent, by the demands of the situation in which he or she is to function as a leader" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 75). Swimmer's intelligence, legal knowledge, dependability, physical energy and commitment to public service (a

Cherokee and Anglo-European-American trait) were held by a young Cherokee that were necessary at a critical juncture in the history of the Cherokee Tribe.

Behaviours Leadership Theory is grounded in the (Anglo-European) American ideals of democracy, individual freedoms, and the humanistic development of potential (McGregor, 1960; Sullivan, 2002; Bass & Stodgill, 1990). However, Sullivan stated: “When an organization is in crisis, the leaders may not have the time or opportunity to openly communicate and work democratically with followers. This type of behavior is not necessarily a consistent pattern in which the leader operates, but has been dictated by the situation” (Sullivan, 2002, p. 25).

Comparing Swimmer’s leadership characteristics to the current models of leadership theory eludes an attempt to grasp an understanding of, or a formation of, a stand-alone American Indian theory of leadership. Taken as a whole, however, the data from the current study indicate Swimmer was operating in the framework of a particular situation; his motives, decisions and actions as a leader were contingent on the critical situation of the Cherokee people at the time Swimmer took office in 1975. The data appear to tell the story of a young Principal Chief with a dogged determination to achieve the goals he set for the rebuilding of the Cherokee Nation. Further, these goals held the primary purpose of bettering the lives of the Cherokee people; goals that were, in part, accomplished by the art of political flexibility.

In 1975, Ross Swimmer became leader of one of the most impoverished tribal people in the United States. Swimmer developed a governmental foundation model that allowed for the construction of housing, a hospital and community health centers, job

creation from local commercial enterprises, and the rebuilding of the Cherokee Nation's education system. Previous to Swimmer's leadership, the environmental situation of the Cherokee Nation was dire.

Swimmer's leadership style appears to contain characteristics of contingent leadership theory. Restating Witherspoon, "Leadership is the result of a good match between personal traits and a situation that requires the exercise of those traits" (Witherspoon, 1997, p. 14).

Conclusions

Swimmer's bricolage approach to leadership, picking and choosing leadership practices from two opposing cultural paradigms for application to problematic situations, is not surprising. Although raised primarily in the White culture, Swimmer was exposed to Cherokee culture as a child, where the focus of education was passing along knowledge about the natural world. The metaphysical lessons of American Indian education (Cherokee included) teach the child to see unities both in the structure of physical things, and in the behavior of things as holistic in which the parts and their value are less significant than the larger picture and its meaning. Because of Swimmer's early childhood exposure to traditional Cherokee culture, a reasonable speculation is made that Swimmer was the product of two cultural schools (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The notion that an early imprint of Cherokee holistic lessons formed Swimmer's ability to "vision" the whole of a problem or an end goal should not be dismissed from future research.

According to Goleman (1997), high intelligence alone does not guarantee a leader. Goleman postulates, from an early age, a child needs to develop the

characteristics of “emotional intelligence.” Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the ability to “control impulse, delay gratification, regulate one’s moods, keep distress from swamping the ability to think, to empathize, and to hope” (p. 34). Cherokee culture, before the negative effects of the unrelenting pressure to assimilate, did emphasize the teaching of emotional intelligence as described by Goleman (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Again, Ross Swimmer, as a child, may have been partially sheltered from complete Anglo-European-American indoctrination, and may have subconsciously incorporated Cherokee values by infrequent visits to the traditional Cherokee community of Locust Grove. These traditional teachings may have been expressed later in Swimmer’s adult leadership characteristics.

The juxtaposed cultural traditional Cherokee leadership and Anglo-European-American cultural leadership attributes found in Swimmer illuminate the liminality of mixed-bloods (Brayboy, 2006). In other words, mixed-bloods are betwixt and between a cultural space. This condition of liminality can create a duality in a modern Cherokee mixed-blood leader, allowing him/her to pick and choose from traditional leadership characteristics as well as Anglo-European-American characteristics, as needed, to accomplish necessary Tribal goals.

Four Explanations Why Cherokee Leadership Is Ignored

A central purpose of the current study has been concerned with researching the leadership attributes of a modern Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. With such a paltry amount of resource material available on the topic of interest, the researcher has felt like an explorer in a wilderness of new discovery. In academia, research continues,

from an Anglo-European-American perspective, to search for the answer to the question of what makes a person an effective leader, to consummate agreement on a definitive model of leadership. With a multitude of crises facing the United States today, it is difficult to listen to a newscast or read current public policy magazines without reading or hearing the statement – America is in desperate need of leadership.

The literature review found the scholarly publications regarding the prominent leadership theories to be exclusively the work of Western scholars, research representing Western science and an Anglo-European-American worldview. The absence of curiosity by Western scholars or their unwillingness to step outside of their narrow worldview to examine and consider the perspective of American Indian leadership is, quite frankly, astonishing.

The American Indian tribes (Cherokees included) did not survive in a vacuum. While Cherokees survived unnoticed by mainstream American and Western scholars, they did not survive without leadership. However, Cherokees have survived with a legacy – one void of little information about American Indian leadership (Cherokee, specifically) from a modern perspective. Following is a discussion of possible reasons of the persistent resistance to study Cherokee leadership (or any American Indian leader), with four arguments supporting why continued study of Cherokee leadership is important.

A Gap In Knowledge

Academia's present policy of disregarding American Indian perspectives of leadership leaves a gap in knowledge, and develops leadership theories, narrowly, from a

single viewpoint (Anglo-European-American). A closed door to potential knowledge is the antithesis of progress and demeans education.

According to the *New York Times* obituary of Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., the noted historian's, *Age of Jackson* "won the 1946 Pulitzer Prize for history." Later in his career, Schlesinger admitted a mistake in writing the *Age of Jackson*. He *neglected* [emphasis added] "to mention President Jackson's brutal treatment of the Indians." (President Andrew Jackson was responsible for removal of the Cherokees from their original homelands.) It is not clear how large an audience Schlesinger was speaking to, and who were made aware of the critical historical error concerning the Cherokees. Unfortunately, the fact of the Cherokees' story remains buried in Anglo-European-American research and stands uncorrected as, *Age of Jackson* "is still standard reading." (Retrieved 9-18-2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/02/obituaries/02schlesinger.html>). According to Loewen (1995), "American Indians have been the most lied-about subset of our population . . . books leave outmost contributions of Native Americans to the modern world [including leadership]" (p. 99; p. 112).

How the Indian Voice Is Silenced

Explanations were found in the literature giving plausible reasons why American Indians are denied voice in the participation of a recounting or study of their history, cultures or politics. First, the indigenous people of the United States were conquered, marginalized, and popularly believed to no longer exist. Indians became romanticized relics and were placed in the past. As Americans continue to perpetuate the myth of the "Vanishing American," American Indians attempting to enter the modern world upset

their historically fixed place, well entrenched in the imagination of mainstream America. There is very little interest in writing about modern American Indian tribes or their leaders. Although the tribes have survived, and many under the direction of good leadership, they were not supposed to have survived. Indians are supposed to be dead. However, is the perpetuation of an inaccurate myth justification for relegation to a bin of permanence? Particularly when knowledge might be gained from listening to their leaders speak on leadership from the Native American perspective?

What is missing from the literature on American Indian leadership is the Indian voice. According to Fixico, “Whether racially prejudiced or guilt-ridden, patronizing, paternalistic, or romantic, Indian history mainly has been perceived from a white perspective, based on the idea that ‘the conquerors write the history.’ More than 30,000 manuscripts have been published about American Indians, and more than ninety percent of that literature has been written by non-Indians” (Mihesuah, 1998, p. 86). Otto Santa Ana re-emphasizes this point of American Indian voicelessness (2004, p. 1):

Each day, many millions of Americans are denied their right to speak in their own words. Remarkably, civil rights advocates still do not roundly condemn this silencing. The formal rules and prevalent norms of U.S. society are rarely questioned, much less disputed. Social institutions and empowered individuals coolly go about their day proscribing a large portion of our society from speaking their mind. It may be surprising in this day and age that the American public continues to believe that certain kinds of people should be silenced for their own good.

The Hawk and the Dove

In his discussion of leadership model and organizational theories, Hanson states that some models and theories are supported by empirical research, and some are not. He characterized the leadership theories supported by empirical measurement as representing

the hawk position. “A hawk” position . . . is articulated by Korman . . . as measurement and theory going hand-in-hand, and the development of one without the other is a waste of time for all concerned”. The “dove” position, in contrast, suggests actions and decisions must often be taken on untested models (Hansen, 2003, p. 183). That is, data must be taken from multiple sources and in multiple ways. Therefore, one must rely upon oral histories, past memories, sketchy writings and the slim body of literature on the topic. “Trust the full bloods who have lived most of their lives in the Nation. They are the ones who know because they live it” (Cockrell, K. 2006).

According to the American Indian Policy Center, because traditional American Indian leadership traits, skills and features have received scant scholarly attention, investigators must necessarily rely upon past memories, oral histories and slim academic writings found on the topic. According to the AIPC, American Indian values and culture have been handed down across generations, and continue to influence Native American Indian leadership today. Knowledge about traditional Native Indian leadership is essential to understanding the workings of contemporary American Indian leadership. Furthermore, in order to collect data, one should follow the “dove” way of knowing.

Champagne (1997) indicated that researchers do not have the patience or willingness to take the time to sit and listen to Native Americans give their history through the medium of storytelling. This method of collecting data requires meeting tribal people on their terms. Also, there is a discounting of “story” by academics, that stories can be inaccurate or embellished. Taking such a position by academics is shortsighted and displays ignorance. As Brayboy (2006) suggested, Indian stories hold

the key to American Indian leadership ways of survival. Shutting down a voice due to a lack of patience perhaps leads to the loss of important information about American Indian leadership.

According to Mankiller (1993), there were several periods of Cherokee history without leadership. The records of history are filled with the successful destructive policies of the federal government aimed at the Cherokees. For a seventy-year period prior to Oklahoma statehood, the federal government believed the Cherokee Tribe no longer existed. With Cherokee voices silenced and no Tribal written records of this time period, nothing is known about Cherokee leadership. However, the Cherokee people did not disappear. Brown (1977) posits that, during time of threat and fear, Cherokees protected their “bits and pieces” of history and means of survival in “glass jars or tobacco tins” (p. 1); buried then, and now, long forgotten.

Whether impatience or discounting the value of adding the Indian voice to the current necessary study of leadership (to name two), are valid explanations for the grave void of information on American Indian leadership, the practice is inexcusable. By witness of this study, the Cherokee people are eager to have their stories heard.

Combating the Mainstream Worldview

According to Reyhner and Eder (2004), it is still “common practice in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, to use teachers and schools to destroy minority cultures and to indoctrinate children into mainstream cultures that continue to maintain ethnocentric and racist attitudes” (p. 326).

Undoubtedly, there will continue to be problems in the education of this country's Indian young people, as the Indian is not vanishing. On the contrary, their population is steadily growing. Reyner and Eder continued, "The 2000 U.S. Census counted 2,476,000 American Indian and Alaska Native . . . Since 1970, the U.S. Native population has increased about one-half million per decade, and this population is becoming increasingly educated." Perhaps the better-educated Indian will start to insist on an education curriculum more reflective of the Native worldview [including leadership]. If so, this will be in direct opposition to the country's standard curriculum of unifying the language and the culture of the United States. Unfortunately, a colonizing attitude of racial and cultural superiority still exists in the U.S. education system today (Reyner & Eder, 2004; p. 330).

The message emerging from the study of cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, geneticists, psychologists, behavioral economists and sociologists, is that people are not autonomous. We are deeply connected to one another (Brooks, 2008). Behind the force of multi-disciplines research is a warning lesson of continuing the singularity of an Anglo-European-American cocooned approach to research on leadership. Western science is not an entity unto itself, nor has the Western leadership model produced recent great leaders.

This researcher suggests, academia, by continuing to exclude leadership models of differing worldviews (particularly the American Indian), is limiting valuable knowledge, possibly of value to the general and specific study of leadership. Discovering new knowledge is exciting and holds the wonder of potential.

Current Information and Concluding Thoughts on Ross O. Swimmer

Swimmer served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1975-1985. He resigned as Chief to accept the appointment by President Reagan as head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Swimmer remained in this position until 1995. For the next six years, he served as president of a consulting firm, the Cherokee Group, L.L.C., representing “Indian clients engaged in government issues at the state and federal level, and supports the development of businesses on Indian lands.”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross_Swimmer).

Swimmer returned to Washington, D. C., in 2001, to become Director of the Office of Indian Trust Transition, an office within the Department of Interior. Currently, he is the Special Trustee for American Indians, an office within the Department of Interior, after President Bush’s nomination, 2003. Swimmer maintains his position Of Counsel with the law firm Hall Estill, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Margaret Swimmer is also a partner of Hall Estill.

According to Swimmer, he was given the job of reforming the Trust. “Congress basically said, “We give up on the BIA ever being able to put an accounting system together. So, we want this project to be moved over to the Special Trustee’s office.” Congressional action was forced by the class-action lawsuit, *Cobell vs. Kempthorne*, filed by beneficiaries of the Trust seeking billions of dollars the suit-holders claimed to be lost due to fraudulent accounting.

Briefly, the Trust, a Congressional product of the Allotment era, was intended to protect Indian land from alienation. Swimmer stated, “This Trust has gone on for a

hundred years . . . with no accountability. The superintendents of the eighty-five BIA agencies scattered around the country were bankers. They collected money from the 500-plus tribes, and nobody ever balanced the funds.” Swimmer added, “There are quotes from the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, from people who were involved in the Allotment process, that said the fractionalization of Indian land is the biggest problem any country faces today. That was 1934 – it’s gotten worse.”

As head of the BIA, Swimmer advocated the elimination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. His stance “earned him critics in Indian Country.” The criticism has not abated. (http://www.theauthenticvoice.org/BrokenTrust_RossSwimmer.html). Swimmer stated during an interview, “The Indians went ‘berserk’ when they heard this.” Their fear was separating the Trust from the BIA. “So, the idea falls away; I’m there, still working, trying to help them with the lawsuit and help them get this Trust straightened out.” (This finding was not included in the body of the study, as the comment does not pertain to the time period of the study.) There were no criticisms of Swimmer voiced by the Cherokee interview participants regarding Swimmer’s role as head of the BIA or Special Trustee for American Indians. The subject was never mentioned in the interview sessions.

New questions were generated rather than answers given when the researcher briefly viewed Swimmer’s leadership as head of the BIA and as Special Trustee for Indian tribes. Did Swimmer, and is Swimmer, using a bricolage approach as a leader responsible for solving massive tribal problems? Is Swimmer crossing cultural boundaries into traditional Cherokee culture and back to mainstream White American culture to find leadership models as needed for problem solving? Successfully building a

governmental foundation for the Cherokee Nation to become an essential economic support to Northeastern Oklahoma, becoming head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to currently overseeing a staff of 650 employees who manage \$3.5 billion dollars in investments for Indian tribes across the country, begs the question of why have people never heard of Ross O. Swimmer? But, then, why do people not hear about any modern American Indian leaders? These are all legitimate questions, requiring additional research. The researcher can only hope, by offering the current study of Ross Swimmer's leadership as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, genuine thoughtfulness has been provoked about traditional Cherokee/Native American leadership, interest transformed into research action, and answers found.

APPENDIX A

Did You Know?

1. Cherokee Nation has 680 employees.
2. Cherokee Nation has a monthly payroll of almost \$800,000 in salaries and fringe benefits.
3. Cherokee Nation, has goods and services totaling nearly \$11,000,000.
4. Cherokee Gardens employs 29 people and has increased its sales from \$200,000 to \$600,000 in only one year.
5. Cherokee Gardens will spend \$500,000 in 1984 for expansion.
6. Cherokee Nation operates the largest and best Headstart program among Indian Tribes with a total of 12 centers.
7. Cherokee Nation is the largest American Indian Housing Authority in the United States with over 2,400 units of housing.
8. Cherokee Nation Talking Leaves Job Corps is one of only two Indian Emphasis Job Corps Centers in the United States.
9. Cherokee Nation covers 14 Oklahoma counties containing 6,408 square miles.
10. Cherokee Nation Tribal services have offices in Bartlesville, Claremore, Locust Grove, Jay, Sallisaw, Stilwell and in the complex at Tahlequah and they see an average of 675 Indian people per month.
11. Cherokee Nation Motor Lodge has 100 rooms, a ballroom, gift shop, restaurant, and fiscal 1983 is its first year to be totally operated by the Cherokee Nation.
12. Cherokee Nation's Advocate, if published once a month and sent to all registered Cherokees, would cost \$275,000 per year.
13. Cherokee Nation Education Department has a total budget of over \$3,869,312 with Higher Education contracted from the BIA for \$1,005,000.
14. Cherokee Nation has a number of self help programs including Tribal Work Experience, Employment Assistance, Tribal Services, Community Development, Indian Child Welfare.
15. Cherokee Nation Alcohol and Substance Abuse program serves an average of 174 persons per month.
16. Cherokee Nation furnishes at least 1,100 meals per day to Job Corps, Headstart, the Elderly programs, and Stilwell Academy.
17. Cherokee Nation operates a fleet of cars, trucks, buses, and vans totaling 117 vehicles.
18. Cherokee Nation LPN school has graduated and placed 67 LPN's since opening in 1978.
19. Cherokee Nation GED programs at Job Corps and Adult Education have graduated 1,103 persons.
20. Cherokee Nation Industries at Stilwell employs 180 persons at an annual payroll of \$1,750,00.

APPENDIX B

Example of Field Notes

An Opportunity To Visit With Ross And Margaret Swimmer

The researcher, following a long-life practice of translating interesting life experiences into stories, presents a “field note story” from the initial interview with Ross and Margaret Swimmer.

The purpose of recounting the researcher’s first interview with the Swimmers is not to compare the Ross and/or Margaret Swimmer of 2008 with the two young people, as they were, in the early 1970s. Life experiences, age and maturation have produced two entirely different adults. However, the opportunity to gain entry into their home and current life, and benefit from their willingness to share their memories of Swimmer’s time as Principal Chief of the Cherokees, is rare and an experience the researcher thought of added interest to the study.

Meeting for the first interview, the Swimmers’ warm greeting did not entirely dispel my slight guilty feeling of conscripting the majority of their time on the agreed date of Saturday, January 12, 2008. Swimmer had just flown in from Washington, D.C., to Tulsa, for the weekend. Calling a few days earlier to confirm the interview time, Swimmer mentioned that he had a lot of tree-trimming work to do the day of the scheduled interview.

On reflection, it was understandable why Swimmer had trees on his mind. Tulsa was recovering from the December 2007 ice-storm that had left age-old trees twisted into eerie shapes, broken, or felled, bark stripped from limbs and trunks as if cleanly shaven

with a deliberate purpose in mind. President George Bush had even declared the entire state of Oklahoma a federal disaster area. The once treed front yard of the Swimmer home looked like every yard and vacant lot in Tulsa; it was a mess. Several times during the interview, Swimmer mentioned the condition of the trees in his front yard and lessons learned from the tree surgeon he worked for as a university student.

During our pre-warm-up conversation, Margaret mentioned that, ever since Ross had worked in D. C., his routine was to fly home at least once a month. Commenting to Margaret that their life style must have been, and is, a sacrifice for their family, she told me, “This is just who Ross is. It is his commitment to public service.” There was not the slightest hint of exasperation or resentment in her tone of voice.

Ross Swimmer is a handsome, soft spoken, elegant man. He is tall at 6’ 5”, slender, and very well groomed. His body motion is minimal. Expression comes from his voice and his keenly alert eyes. There is an air of formality about him, but it does not assume a presentation of bracing rigidity. Swimmer seemed comfortable with himself, relaxed. However, the question occurred to me about how much he wanted to protect that “self;” what information he would voluntarily give me. Would the information given be slanted in his favor, as I had provided Swimmer with the research questions, giving him time to think, remember and re-write his history as Principal Chief, if he so chose to do so?

In the Swimmers’ living room, Swimmer sat with me on one sofa, with the tape recorder between us. Margaret sat on a side sofa. The diningroom was the only other room of the house that was openly visible. Both the livingroom and diningroom were

furnished in a formal fashion. There was a sense this area of the house was for greeting and meeting; not the place where casualness takes over and the feet go up for reading, television watching, or intimate conversation. In these two rooms, there were no clues that one had walked into a Cherokee Indian's home – no Indian baskets – no Indian rugs – no Indian paintings. There was one exception. Margaret Swimmer was wearing a stunning beaded necklace.

Margaret Swimmer counterbalances her husband. While certainly physically attractive, she is shorter in height, loquacious and physically expressive. However, Margaret became quiet when her husband talked, and became a listener. She stayed throughout the majority of the first five-hour interview session.

When making arrangements for the initial interview, Swimmer would often remark that the researcher should talk with Margaret, as “she remembers better than I do.” Swimmer's comment raised a caution flag, and it was natural to wonder to what degree memory loss might affect Swimmer's recall of the time period, 1975-1985. However, as the interview progressed, any concern of a Ross Swimmer failing memory was soon dismissed, as Swimmer recalled dates and events with ease.

Since Margaret Swimmer continued to remain in the interview session, it was reasonable to assume that she was serving as her husband's memory checker. Later, however, when Margaret told stories of working alongside her husband during his campaigns, it occurred to me that they were a team. Margaret Swimmer had remarked earlier, “We married young and sort of grew up together.”

In Swimmer's first campaign for Principal Chief, 1975, Margaret told about assuming the role of "being in charge of all the details – overseeing." As the first interview came to a close, the researcher sensed Margaret Swimmer's role had not diminished with time. She is still the team's "overseer." Any sense that Swimmer would be less than open about sharing his life or memories of his leadership as Principal Chief evaporated when the researcher posed the first interview question to Swimmer: "Tell me about your childhood."

Appendix C

Excerpts From Interviews

Sample 1

Questions: Tell me about Mr. Keeler

Participant: Oh, Keeler – he was such a genius, you could almost hear him think. When he got to describing one of his dreams, you could almost anticipate what was going to come next. He had fabulous insight on the Cherokee Way of life, which is so ironic because that had nothing whatsoever to do with his selection as Chief . . . He was unique in that way, because he felt comfortable in that situation; and he also felt very comfortable sitting on a rock in Oak Ridge, or Bell, talking to a group of citizens.

Question: Would you describe Ross Swimmer as having that same level of comfort?

Participant: No.

Question: What would you attribute that to?

Participant: Don't know. I guess the era in which they grew up, I suppose. Mr. Keeler had such a way of understanding all points of view without alienating anyone's point of view, and Ross did not have that ability.

Question: I've heard people say that Mr. Keeler had a more gregarious personality and Ross a more standoffish personality, but yet Mr. Keeler selected him and groomed him.

Participant: Yes, I was working for Mr. Keeler when Ross came on board, and he was just a young lawyer that sat back in the back office that we saw occasionally.

Sample 2

Question: How many times were you a Council member before Vice-Chief?

Participant: I was only a Council member for two years. That's when Ross went to, and that's when the Council chose me, to serve out Wilma's two year term.

Question: When you were elected to Council in '83, at what level would you say the Nation was during that stage? Where had Ross brought it?

Participant: I think he had brought it to the point where we were trying to get – we were learning still yet to govern ourselves. The Council was pretty much subjected to the thinking of the Chief. The Chief had a big role at that time in what direction he wanted to go. He would go to them, and he would ask the Council if they would pass this; and it was pretty much that way as we found him.

Question: If you were going to mention, in the two years you were with Ross – give a one-sentence description of his strengths, one of his weaknesses – what would they be?

Participant: [respondent thought a long time]. Well, probably he was not quite as good of a communicator as he could have been, you know. His father, I believe, was a full-blood [Swimmer reported his father a half-blood], but he wasn't raised that way. He probably didn't have a good touch with people that were still back in the communities and trying to eke out a living the best they could on small plots of land. That would probably be it – the inability to galvanize these people into a unit so they would work together and support him.

Sample 3

Question: Is the full-blood population growing smaller?

Participant: It is. Inter-marriage. Of course, they are having smaller families now than they've ever had in their entire history. Just in Kenwood alone, when I started going up there, it was not uncommon to find Cherokee families with nine, ten, and eleven kids. Now, it's unusual to find them if they have four. They are inter-marrying a lot. You know, marrying outside the Tribe. There's a lot of loss of Tribal lands within those communities, so you have White people moving in which then markedly increases intergrowth.

Question: So, the communities are weakening?

Participant: Yes. There's a pretty clear distinction in the Cherokee communities, where the Cherokee Nation has entered that community and offered some sort of incentive for that community to develop itself – like in Kenwood – the Tribe will offer perks to certain members of the community, but not to others. Those perks are rooted to your loyalty to the principal officer of the Tribe at the time. There's a distinction between, not just people in the community who are supportive or opposed to the administration, but even a distinction between those people who even just support the administration and those people who just live.

Question: Is there still strong leadership back in the communities?

Participant: There is in some of the communities. But, a lot of that leadership is usurped and co-opted by a connection to the Cherokee Nation. Their focus is taken away from

what can you do for the community toward what can you do for the Tribal government.
So, the community benefits very little from that sort of leadership.

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