

For the *Sga-Du-Gi* (Community): Modern Day Cherokee Stickball [Abstract]

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Tucked away in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina on the Cherokee Indian Reservation is a living tradition that predates the “discovery” of America: the game of stickball. Researchers have reported on the sport and the complex rituals that surround it since the early-twentieth century. Often referred to as the “little brother of war,” it is much more than a game.

With the purpose of uncovering the reasons for playing the game and its larger meaning as part of players’ Cherokee identity and culture, the primary investigator (a native of Cherokee and an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee), interviewed eleven current and former stickball players about what stickball means to them and its importance to Cherokee culture. Three main themes emerged: (1) cultural preservation; (2) community reinforcement; and (3) ethnic identity affirmation. This study exemplifies the importance of sport as a tool for cultural preservation and explores the emphasis and integration of the game in the Cherokee community.

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