



# CHEROKEE FINGER WEAVING

Written by **Dayini Heaven Lossie**, Eastern Band of Cherokee, in collaboration with the Native Resonance Cohort sponsored by the Native American Indian Association and the Tennessee Arts Commission.



## CONTENT SCOPE

Students will engage with Cherokee culture and art through the Cherokee word "Gadugi", and creating their own woven keychain. This hands-on activity not only teaches students about weaving but also incorporates lessons in history, culture, and art technique.

## FOR TEACHERS

Subject & Topic: Social Studies (Native American History) and Art

Grade Level: K-12

Lesson Time: 1 Hour Class Period

Group Size: Regular Class Size (18 - 25 students)

## MATERIALS

- Yarn (Six 12" Strands Each)
- Key Ring
- Clipboard
- Scissors

## OBJECTIVES

STUDENTS WILL:

- Learn about the Cherokee people, focusing on their history, culture, and weaving techniques.
- Understand the significance of weaving in Cherokee society, including its uses and symbolic meanings.
- Develop weaving skills by creating their own keychain using traditional Cherokee techniques.



## CHEROKEE WORD, GADUGI

Gadugi (pronounced: ga-doo-gee) embodies a cherished Cherokee value centered around community and togetherness. Unlike the western emphasis on individualism and personal achievement, Cherokee society has historically prioritized communal well-being and togetherness. Everything the Cherokee did wasn't motivated by selfish reasoning, it was for the betterment of the village, the tribe, and everyone as a whole. Gadugi serves as a powerful symbol of Cherokee ethics, reflecting a deep commitment to collective responsibility and support.

This principle of Gadugi continues to inspire and guide community initiatives and events, such as the Cherokee Day of Caring and the ceremony Honoring Long Man, showcasing its enduring relevance. These gatherings not only celebrate Cherokee traditions but also reinforce the importance of working together for the common good, illustrating the vibrant application of Gadugi in contemporary Cherokee life.



## WHO ARE THE CHEROKEE

Cherokee (pronounced CHAIR-Oh-key). The name comes from the Creek word chelokee, which means “people of a different speech.” The Cherokee refer to themselves as Ani'-Yun'wiya', meaning “the principal people,” or Tsalagi, which comes from a Choctaw word for “people living in a land of many caves.”

The Cherokee are one of the indigenous peoples of the southeastern United States. Before the 18th century, the lands of the Cherokee encompassed what are now the states of North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Alabama.

Today, the Eastern Band of Cherokee live on 57,000 acres in the North Carolina Mountains known as the Qualla Boundary, and on smaller tracts of land to the west near Murphy and Robbinsville, NC.

For centuries, Cherokee's have passed traditional art work from generation to generation. These artists have turned natural materials such as river cane, clay, wood, and stone into beautiful works of art. Basketry, pottery, stone carving, wood carving, bead working, finger weaving, and traditional masks are a few of the timeless forms of Cherokee art that still exist today.

(written by Alica Murphy Wildcatt)

## EVALUATION

Evaluate students based on their engagement in discussions, the effort and creativity displayed in their pinch pot creation, and their understanding and respect for Cherokee culture and pottery techniques as reflected in their final piece and participation in class discussions. This lesson plan not only educates students about Cherokee history and art but also encourages them to think critically about indigenous cultures and the importance of preserving such traditions.

- How does creating this fingerweave keychain connect to the term Gadugi?
- What was the most challenging aspect of creating your fingerweave keychain, and how did you overcome it? How does mastering this technique give you insight into the skill and creativity of Cherokee artisans?
- How does learning Cherokee words and history stories enrich the experience of creating traditional art? How important do you think language is in preserving cultural heritage?