

## Trail of Tears Prayer Journey in Georgia

Tom Cutts

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Edited by Krista Moon



*Some of the Peacemakers for Sacred Healing group members and participants of the kickoff for the Trail of Tears Prayer Journey. (Photo courtesy of Tom Cutts.)*

Seven pilgrims of the Peacemakers for Sacred Healing were welcomed at the New Echota Historic Site near Calhoun, Georgia on Saturday June 8, 2013 as they launched their 1,000-mile Trail of Tears Prayer Journey. Nearly forty people gathered to welcome the Peacemakers, including pastors of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), leaders of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and members of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU).

New Echota in Northwest Georgia was selected for the start of the Peacemakers' healing pilgrimage, because it was the Capitol of the Cherokee before President Andrew Jackson forced the removal of the Cherokee to Indian Territory in 1838. Many thousands of Cherokee died on that winter journey to present-day Oklahoma. The removal from their homes and the subsequent death march is known by the Cherokee as their "Trail of Tears."



*Participants at the opening ceremony of the Prayer Journey at the New Echota Welcome Center's theater. (Photo courtesy of Bob Selle.)*

The Peacemakers for Sacred Healing are prayerfully and tearfully retracing one of the routes of the Trail of Tears, repenting for the egregious violation of the human rights of the First Americans. In the spirit of offering, healing, and reconciliation they hope to comfort those in the Unseen World who suffered along the Trail of Tears.

The program on Saturday began with a 17-minute video in the theater of the New Echota Historic Site. It told the story of the Cherokee in North Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama and how President Jackson defied the Supreme Court that had ruled that the Cherokee had the right to remain on their lands. "There was not a dry eye in the room," according to Peacemakers for Sacred Healing spokeswoman Rev. Claire Daugherty. She added, "There was a sense of time suspended in the opening ceremony which lasted two hours. We heard from native peoples whose ancestors had been removed or who had gone into hiding to

avoid removal.”

After the video, the participants walked to the re-constructed Council House. The program, held in the upper room of the Council House, included an explanation of the Prayer Journey by Mrs. Claire Daugherty, co-founder of the Kingmaker Magazine. A poem about Little Big Horn was read by Katherine Cromwell, the Virginia Chairwoman of the WFWP. An explanation about Cherokee life was presented by Pastor Samuel Mosteller, ACLC minister and President of the Georgia Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), who grew up in the area. Rev. Mosteller himself is a descendant of two Native-American tribes – the Creek and the Cherokee. Then, a healing ceremony complete with Native flute music and drumming was conducted by Tom Blue Wolf, a member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.



*Tom Blue Wolf, a member of the Poarch Band Creek tribe, conducted a Reconciliation and Healing Ceremony including Native flute music. (Courtesy of Tom Cutts.)*

Blue Wolf shared many stories he heard from his grandfather and grandmother, and commented, "The gathering today demonstrates how we can recognize our differences and yet come together in humility, honoring each other. The creation calls, not for conquest and division, but for learning to walk together in harmony and unity. Language has a profound effect on how we perceive the universe. The Cherokee language has no words for doubt, or maybe, or manipulation. The Cherokee greeting means 'I am you being me.' This reminds us that we are all one family."



*After the video presentation in the New Echota Museum, the participants walked to the reconstructed Council House where the Healing Ceremony was held in the upper room. (Photo courtesy of Tom Cutts.)*

"This healing service was a great experience and worth every mile driven to get to New Echota," remarked Pastor Samuel Mosteller. He continued, "It took 175 years to make peace for the 4,000 who died on their way to Oklahoma. Now let there be true peace for the Cherokee and other first nation tribes."

Multi-faith prayers for the success of the Prayer Journey were offered by Rev. Dr. Michael Jenkins of the Family Federation, Minister Rena Marroquin of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, and Shayk Subhan Inayat Burton of the Sufi Order of Villa Rica. Then, each participant wrote his or her repentance on a piece of "flash" paper, and one-by-one they burned their papers in a candle.

Minister Reiko Jenkins invited each of the participants to sign their names to a meaningful declaration of reconciliation.

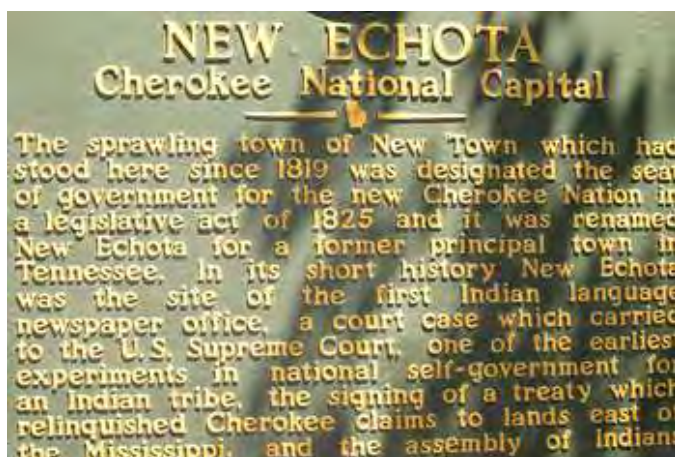
Rev. Tom Cutts, National Executive Director of the ACLC, commended the people on the tour for their work in resolving the pain of those in the Spiritual World who suffered along the Trail of Tears. He later observed that, "Even the weather that day was a miracle." It had been raining every day for five days before the event. And it rained two days after the event. But on the day of the event, a light mist lifted and

the sun came out so that the participants could enjoy a picnic on the grounds.



*Location of New Echota*

After the ceremony, participants toured the grounds of the Historic Site, visiting the Supreme Court Building, the Newspaper Office, Vann's Tavern, the home of Samuel Worcester, a Congregational missionary, and model farms. After a tour of the grounds, a picnic was enjoyed by all.



*A plaque commemorating the town New Echota, former capital of the Cherokee nation. (Photo courtesy of Tom Cutts.)*