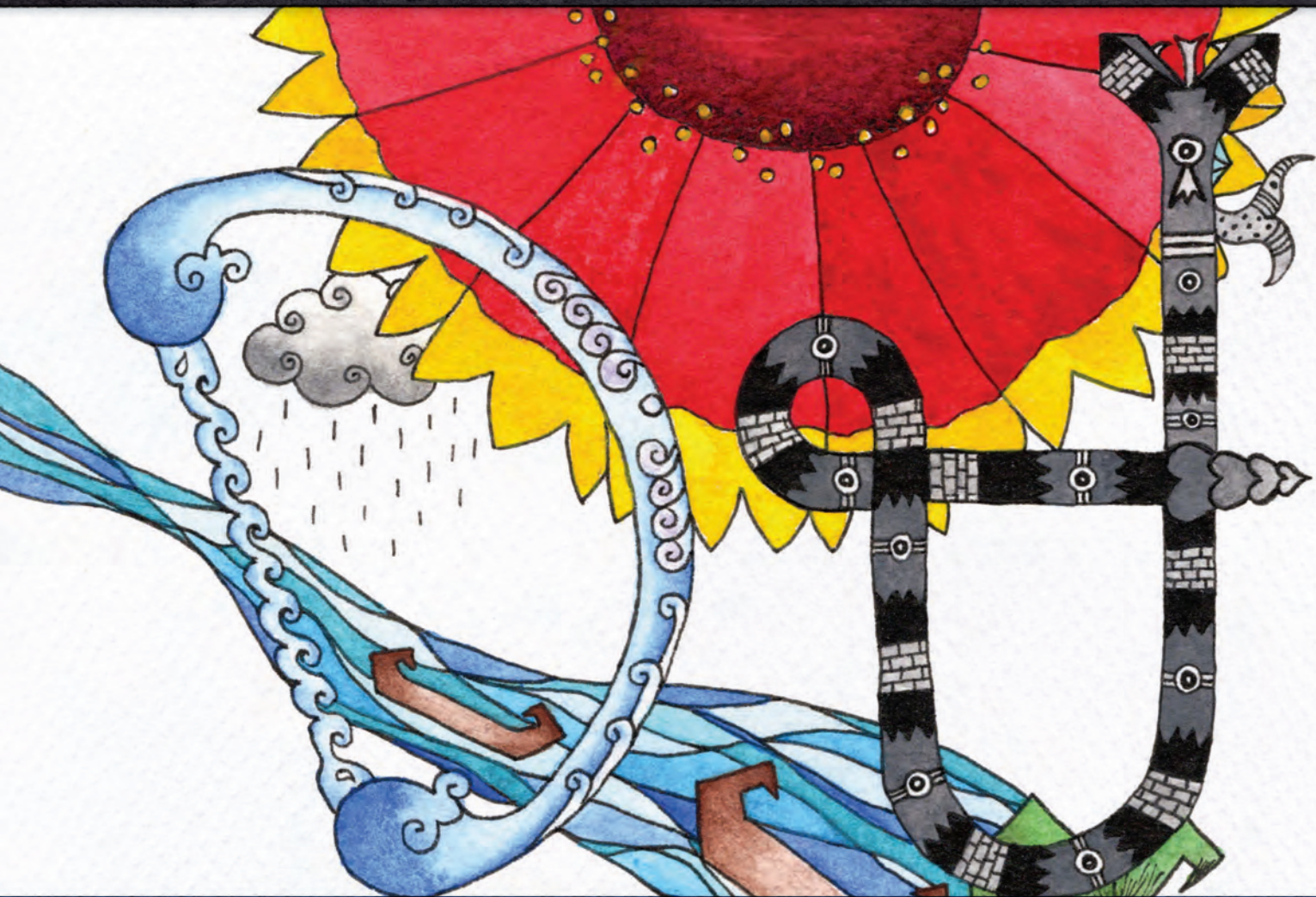


# The Cherokee Syllabary

AN ILLUSTRATED KEY TO THE CHEROKEE LANGUAGE



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Tsalagi Digoweli Tsunoyvgi

Written by Brad Wagnon • Illustrated by Beth Anderson

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WRITTEN BY

Brad Wagnon

ILLUSTRATED BY

Beth Anderson

The Cherokee alphabet is not an alphabet at all but a **syllabary**. That means that each Cherokee character represents a complete syllable, not just a consonant or a vowel. The Cherokee word for “water,” pronounced *ama*, is written with three English letters, **a**, **m**, and **a**. Using the Cherokee syllabary, the same word is written with only two characters: **D**, pronounced *a*, and **Ꮓ** pronounced *ma*.

Accompanying each of the illustrations is a facing page that shows a Cherokee word that contains the illustrated Cherokee syllabary character. The sound of each syllable in the Cherokee word is shown below the corresponding Cherokee character. The English translation of the Cherokee word is shown on the following line.

A row of characters from the Cherokee syllabary chart is shown at the bottom of each page, with each character’s corresponding sound below it.

The entire Cherokee syllabary is shown on the next page as a chart. The chart contains a column for each vowel sound; the rows show how those vowel sounds combine with each of the consonant sounds to make a Cherokee syllable.

### Basic Pronunciation Key

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>a:</b> as a in “father” | <b>e:</b> as a in “cake”                             |
| <b>i:</b> as e in “Pete”   | <b>o:</b> as o in “hello”                            |
| <b>u:</b> as u in “tuba”   | <b>v:</b> as u in “rung” but with a more nasal sound |

All the Cherokee consonant sounds are the same as their English versions with a few exceptions:

- g:** sounds like the *g* in “gaff” or the *k* in “kite”
- qu:** sounds like the *qu* in “question” or the *gw* in “Gwen”
- tl:** non-English sound made by combining *t* or *h* with the *l* sound
- Ts:** sounds like *j* in “John,” or *ch* in “chair”

D		R		T		Ꭰ		Ꭱ		Ꭲ
a		e		i		o		u		v
Ꭰ	Ꭱ	Ꭲ		Ꭳ		Ꭴ		Ꭵ		Ꭶ
ga	ka	ge		gi		go		gu		gv
Ꭷ		Ꭸ		Ꭹ		Ꭺ		Ꭻ		Ꭼ
ha		he		hi		ho		hu		hv
Ꭽ		Ꭾ		Ꭿ		Ꮀ		Ꮁ		Ꮂ
la		le		li		lo		lu		lv
Ꮃ		Ꮄ		Ꮅ		Ꮆ		Ꮇ		
ma		me		mi		mo		mu		
Ꮉ	Ꮊ	Ꮋ		Ꮌ		Ꮍ		Ꮎ		Ꮏ
na	hna	nah		ne		ni		no		nu
Ꮏ		Ꮐ		Ꮑ		Ꮒ		Ꮓ		Ꮔ
qua		que		qui		quo		quu		quv
Ꮖ	Ꮗ	Ꮘ		Ꮙ		Ꮚ		Ꮛ		Ꮜ
sa	s	se		si		so		su		sv
Ꮞ	Ꮟ	Ꮠ	Ꮡ	Ꮢ		Ꮣ		Ꮤ		Ꮥ
da	ta	de	te	di	ti	do/to		du/tu		dv/tv
Ꮦ	Ꮧ	Ꮨ		Ꮩ		Ꮪ		Ꮫ		Ꮬ
tla	dla	tle		tli		tlo		tlu		tlv
Ꮮ		Ꮯ		Ꮰ		Ꮱ		Ꮲ		Ꮳ
tsa		tse		tsi		tso		tsu		tsv
Ꮴ		Ꮵ		Ꮶ		Ꮷ		Ꮸ		Ꮹ
wa		we		wi		wo		wu		wv
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ya		ye		yi		yo		yu		yv



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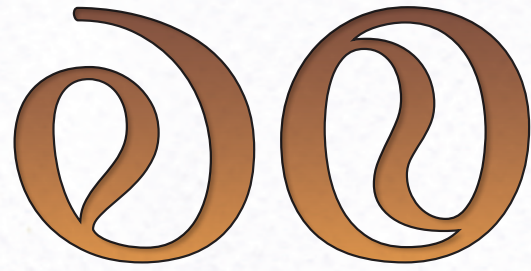
ga lv lo i

sky

S T Y A J E  
ga ge gi go gu gv







ka wi

coffee



ka



W @ @ @ P

ha wi n' di tlv

underground

h h h h h h

ha he hi ho hu hv



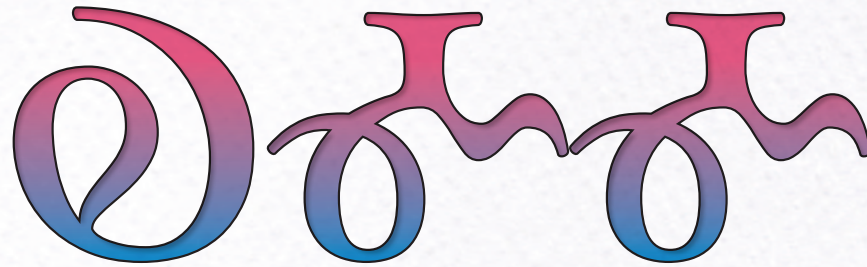
4M

se lu

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W	δ	ρ	G	M	ϣ
la	le	li	lo	lu	lv



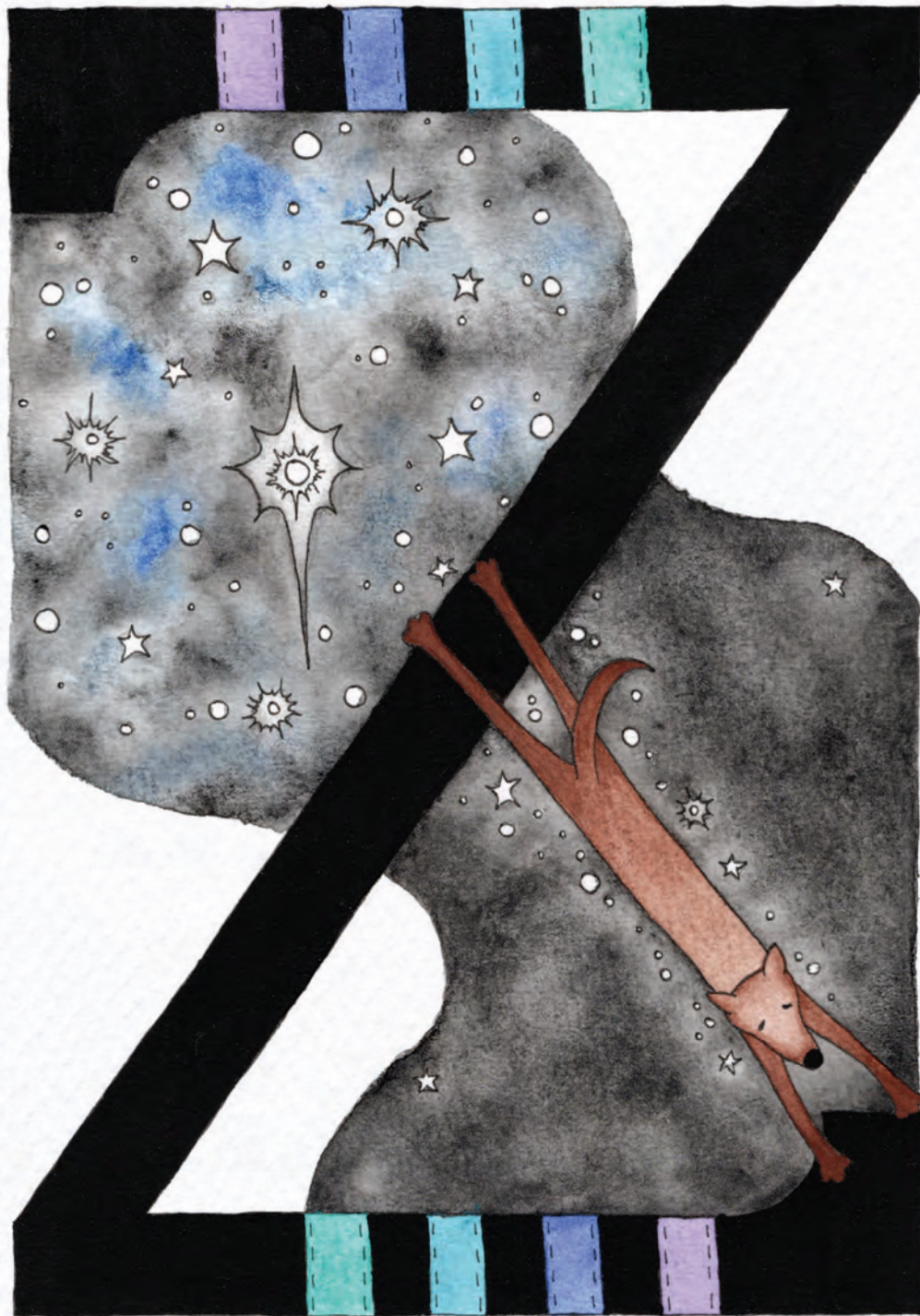


ka ma ma

butterfly

ma me mi mo mu





ZØB

no q' si

star

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na hna nah ne ni no nu nv



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pepper

I ᐱ ᐅ ᐅ ᐅ ᐅ ᐅ

qua que qui quo quu quv



RV TƏɪ Rʌ

sv gi i na ge e hi

wild onion

ʊ 4 b ɸ & R  
sa se si so su sv



සේව

s ga du gi

community

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LSB

da g' si

turtle

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da de di do du dv



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tlo ge si

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tla tle tli tlo tlu tlv





KW

tso la

tobacco

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tsa tse tsi tso tsu tsv



wa ya

wa ya

wolf

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## About the Artist

Beth Anderson is a Cherokee Nation citizen and a contemporary visual artist. Her work is influenced by her culture, her love of materials and handmade objects, and her relationship with nature. Beth holds a BFA in sculpture from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, and is certified by the Cherokee Nation Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO). She is a member of the US Department of Interior's Indian Arts and Crafts Board and is a board member and the Social Media Chair of the Southeastern Indian Artists Association. Beth currently lives in Upstate New York. You can contact her at [waterbirdarts@yahoo.com](mailto:waterbirdarts@yahoo.com).



## About the Author

Brad Wagon, author, and storyteller is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. He taught Cherokee history, culture, and language at Tahlequah High School for ten years. Brad has a degree from Northeastern State University in Criminal Justice and Native American Studies. Brad works for Cherokee Nation Emergency Management as the Community Preparedness Coordinator. He has a passion for sharing Cherokee History and Culture with future generations and has authored four Cherokee children's books based on traditional Cherokee stories: *How the World Was Made: A Cherokee Story*, *The Land of the Great Turtles*, and *The First Fire: A Cherokee Story*. Brad lives in Gideon, OK with his wife Tanya and right next door to his mom on the same property where he grew up. You can contact Brad at [bradwagoncco@gmail.com](mailto:bradwagoncco@gmail.com).

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## About the Book

We created this book to give Cherokee children the opportunity to see their language in a similar way that English-speaking children have been able to see theirs for centuries. The concept for the illustrations was influenced by medieval illuminated manuscripts. Our intent was to allow Cherokee people of all ages to appreciate and celebrate their wonderful language. We hope you and your children enjoy this beautiful new learning tool.

BRAD AND BETH



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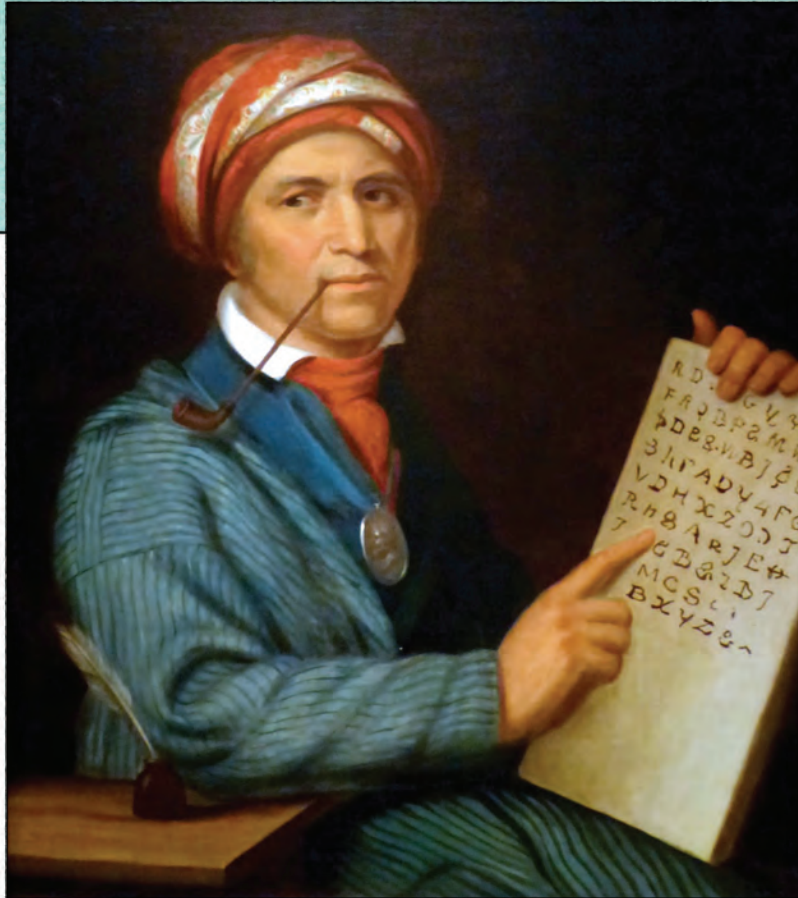
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Sequoyah was raised by his Cherokee mother, Wuh-teh of the Paint clan, in what is now Tennessee. He never learned to speak, read, or write English, but he was an accomplished silversmith, painter, and warrior. He believed the secret of the white people's superior power was their written language. From 1809 to 1821, Sequoyah created the Cherokee syllabary, which brought literacy to his tribe. Word about the invention of the syllabary quickly spread, and within months, thousands of Cherokees became literate. The simplicity of his system enabled pupils to rapidly learn it, and soon Cherokees throughout the nation were teaching it in their schools and publishing books and newspapers in their own Cherokee language.



**T**he *Cherokee Syllabary: An Illustrated Key to the Cherokee Language* offers parents and educators a tool to introduce Cherokee children, as well as adults, to the syllabary of their native language. It gives readers of all backgrounds a chance to see the written language that has been used by the Cherokee Nation for over two hundred years. The introduction and pronunciation key aid in understanding the beautifully illustrated syllabary characters. The book is a valuable educational resource for schools and libraries and adds multicultural diversity to classrooms and collections. For all ages.

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