**Counting the beat**

Cherokee words are divided into *moras*, or ‘beats.’ Certain vowels in each word carry the word’s *primary stress*, or ‘pitch accent.’ This allows us to distinguish words with the same syllable pattern, but different stress patterns:

**Ex.** am**a** – ‘water,’ (1 beat) but **á**:m.a – ‘salt’ (2 beats)

Vowels with primary stress will be produced with a different *pitch* than the rest of the word. Words may also have a *secondary* stress, but the structure of the word will orient around the primary one.

Cherokee speakers will often ‘drop’ (not pronounce) vowels within words or at the end of them. This pattern of ‘dropping’ is predictable. The vowel with the *primary* *stress* will always be pronounced. Usually a group of *one stressed* and *one unstressed* will complete a unit, and any extra syllables may be dropped. Stressed syllables will never be dropped. In the above example, **á**:m(a), ‘salt,’ the parentheses around the *a* indicate that the *a* can be dropped. This would reduce the number of ‘beats’ to one – a long *a* and an *m*. The following examples illustrate the differences in syllable structure and ‘beat’ counts that exist in Cherokee words:

1 beat 2 beats 3 beats 4 beats

n**í O**s**í**gw.u tsanad**í**sg**o**(’i) didinil**v**´sadad**i**sdisg**v**(’i)

had**í** haw**í**n(a) agwadaw**ó**sd**i** denad**a**goh**v**y**u**

y**í**g(i) **á**sgaya g**v´**g**e**yuw(a)halist**á**yah**v**ga

**ó**sd(a) asg**á**y(a)

am**á**  **u**n**v´**d(i)

**á**m(a) agw**é**nvs**v**(i)

Note that a word may have more *syllables* than it has *beats*. Factors like vowel deletion or the addition of suffixes will often change the tonal pattern and/or “beat” count of the words.

**Sight reading**

Read the following words aloud, attempting to fit them into the correct number of ‘beats.’ Follow the guide above each column.

1 beat 2 beats 3 beats 4 beats

haw**á** its**ú:**la dunats**ó:**sd**i** tsunad**é**lokw**a:**sd**i**

sg**í** gal**v**´:quod**i** wid**a**tsin**é:**g**i**s(i) **á:**gw**e**n**v**s**v**(’i)

gats**v**´ un**é**hlan**v**h(i) **a**day**v**:lat**í**sg(i) igid**ú:**w**a:**g**i**

**How many beats?**

Count the number of beats in the following words based on the stress pattern and vowel lengths. Read the words aloud to help determine the number.

1. K**a**giy**ú:**sd**i** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Usg**á**s**e**hd**i** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Gal**v´:**lad**i** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. **A**gwats**é:**li \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Dunad**o**hlg**v´**:’i \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_