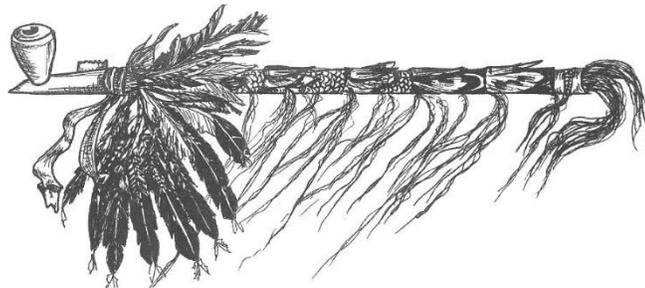


LEGENDS AND STORIES



Introduction: This section contains Legends and Stories that are generally based in the Native American Indian theme. Some are just legends or stories with entertainment value. Some are legends or stories handed down through Native American ancestry. Others have a purpose... they contain a lesson or a tradition that is passed down through generations. Legends and Stories can play an important role in Native Sons & Daughters Programs by creating a peaceful time of reflection on the story or lessons learned and/or bringing togetherness among a Tribe or Longhouse event.

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MORE COMING SOON

The Great Mystery

Long ago, the Great Mystery caused this land to be, and made the Indians to live in this land. Well has the Indian fulfilled all the intent of the Great Mystery for him...

Once, only Indians lived on this land. Then came strangers from across the Great Water. No land had they; we gave them of our land. No food had they; we gave them of our corn. The strangers became many and they filled all the country. They dig gold... from my mountains; they build houses... of the trees of my forest; they rear cities... of my stones and rocks; they make fine garments... from the hides and wool of animals that eat my grass. None of the things that make their riches did they bring with them from beyond the Great Water; all comes from my land, the land that the Great Mystery gave to the Indians.

And when I think upon this, I know that it is right, even thus. In the heart of the Great Mystery, it was meant that stranger visitors... my friends from across the Great Water... should come to my land; that I should bid them welcome; that all men should sit down with me and eat together of my corn. It was meant by the Great Mystery that the Indian should give to all peoples.

But the white man has never known the Indian. I tis thus: there are two roads, the white man's road and the Indian's road. Neither traveler knows the road of the other. Thus, ever has it been, from the long ago, even unto today... when I think, I know that it is in the mind of the great Mystery that white men and Indians who fought together should now be one people.

There are birds of many colors, red, green, yellow, blue... yet it is all one bird. There are horses of many colors, brown, black, yellow, white... yet it is all one horse. So to with cattle, and all living things, animals, flowers & trees. So, men in this land where once were only Indians are new men of every color... white, black, yellow, red, yet all one people. That this should come to pass was in the heart of the Great Mystery. It is right thus. And everywhere there shall be peace.

Lakota Legend of the Dream Catcher

Long ago when the world was young, an old Lakota spiritual leader was on a high mountain and had a vision. In his vision, Iktomi, the great trickster and teacher of wisdom, appeared in the form of a spider. Iktomi spoke to him in a sacred language that only the spiritual leaders of the Lakota could understand.

As he spoke, Iktomi, the spider, took the elders willow hoop which had feathers, horse hair and beads and offerings on it and began to spin a web. He spoke about the cycles of life... and how we begin our lives as infants and we move on to childhood, and then to adulthood. Finally, we go to old age where we must be taken care of as infants, completing the cycle.

“But”, Iktomi said as he continues to spin his web, “in each time of life, there are many forces... some good and some bad. If you listen to the good forces, they will steer you in the right direction. But if you listen to the bad forces, they will hurt you and steer you in the wrong direction.”

He continued, “There are many forces and different directions that can help or interfere with the harmony of nature, and also with the Great Spirit and all of his wonderful teachings.”

All the while the spider spoke, he continued to weave his web, starting from the outside and working towards the center. When Iktomi finished speaking, he gave the Lakota elder the web and said... “See, the web is a perfect circle, but there is a hole in the center of the circle.” He said “use the web to help yourself and your people to reach your goals and to make good use of your people’s ideas, dreams and visions.

“If you believe in the Great Spirit, the web will catch your good ideas... and the bad ones will go through the hole.” The Lakota elder passed on his vision to his people and now the Sioux Native American Indians use the dream catcher as the web of their life. It is hung above their bed or in their homes to sift their dreams and visions. The good in their dreams are captured in the web of life... but the evil in their dreams escapes through the hole in the center and are no longer a part of them. They believe that the dream catcher holds the destiny of their future.

(**Note:** Some bands of Native American Indians believe the bad ideas are caught in the web and the good ideas pass through to the individual. Either account is considered to be acceptable.)



The Legend of White Feather

Born of the Harvest Moon long, long ago were there boys on the same day. They were so, so alike... swift runners, cunning and smart. The fact was, they were too much alike. Finally, one boy was fed up with the confusion among the three, so he placed a white feather at his waist in the back. Soon his ceremonial outfit took on a white bustle of feathers and he was to be called White Feather by all.

It was in his tenth year that the legend finds White Feather and his brothers. Tragedy was to strike in the last days of their birth moon. A mighty bear entered the camp at night and attacked many wigwams. One of the brothers was killed! The next day, another brother, in his anxiousness to spread news to the neighboring camp, overturned his birchbark canoe and struck his head on the river rocks. He to, died.

White Feather was stricken with grief. So much so that he climbed up the sacred hill for council with the Great Spirit. Reaching the top, he knelt before the clouds, and a shadowy image of a tall, proud, yet very old Indian Chief appeared. "I have come to council with the Great Spirit, for I have lost my brothers so young and I do not understand its meaning!" said White Feather.

The Old Chief spoke... "Your brothers will always be with you, for they are part of you and you of them. They are not gone, only passed to the Upper World. They remain cunning, swift and smart and are needed at the Great Council Fires above. You though, are destined for greatness here on earth!"

The Old Chief held out his hands. In one, a great headdress worthy of only the mightiest of Chiefs. In the other was corn and grass. "One of these you must choose. One is greatness among your people! The other, White Feather is greatness among the forest and the animals of the great plains! You would be a great leader as either and be known across all this great land for all time. As the representative of the animals of the forest, you would stand among the greats at the Council of the Sky forever."

"Which do you choose, White Feather?" asked the Old Chief... Which should he choose? Such pride in either! "Can I have some time", asked White Feather. The Old Chief answered, "tomorrow's moon is the last of your Birth Moon. When it sets, you must choose. Come to me then!" With that, the Old Chief vanished.

White Feather sat all night and all the next day. Finally, the moon rose and the Old Chief came to White Feather. He again had the grains of corn and grass in one hand and a great headdress in the other. He spoke... "Which do you choose, White Feather? You are cunning, smart and swift and your moon is falling. "Choose, White Feather, choose!" he demanded.

Which did White Feather choose? Where do we see the evidence of his decision for all time as the Old chief professed? The legend of White Feather stands as a memory to him and his brothers as the swift, cunning and smart white-tailed deer seen that evening as their white feathery bustles flew as all three bounced quickly across the fading light, as the moon settled on the horizon. And thus, it was and remains today and for all of time, just as the Old Chief had said.

The Pathfinder Story

(This story is written to be told as Native Sons and Daughters are ready to step up into the Pathfinders level of the program. The main character of the story is a male figure but can be easily switched to female if desired)

The “Age of Passing” is an important time in any young Native Son or Native Daughters life. It signifies an important step they take toward growing up. Although this generally occurs about age 8 or 9, there first must occur some significant event for them to become “Pathfinders”.

Such a time had come for young Whispering Wind. His need to see the mysterious valley beyond the mountain took him down a long path against the warnings and wishes of his family and tribal chief. Many braves had traveled this trail but very few survived. The concern was not for the valley beyond, but for the hardship of the trip.

The story goes that along the way, Whispering Wind had come to a fork in the path. One path is known to be shorter, but with sharp jagged rocks, high dangerous passages and deep, dark tunnels with mysterious creatures. The other path passes through quiet comforting meadows, along peaceful streams, and along flowered hillsides. However, it is very very long and very tiresome.

Whispering Wind decides to ask the council of the Great Spirit. He kneels, arms raised and closes his eyes... no response! He is very confused. He sits at the point of choice with a heavy heart. “What shall I do? Which way shall I go?” Then he remembered the warm hand of his father. The strong arm that held his bow the first time he showed Whispering Wind the skills of the arrow. The cautious manner he help him hold his spear to strike his first rabbit. The trust he put in his hand with the paddle in their birch-bark canoe.

Whispering Wind also remembered the sacred Aims that his father helped him to understand; the love of family and neighbor; the need to be clean in body and attentive to others; and the wonderful work of the Great Spirit in forest, field and stream. He was truly Pals Forever-Friends Always with his father. What happened next was what carried Whispering Wind to his “Time of Passing”, and became an honored “Pathfinder”!

At that point, he stood up. The fearful look had left his face. His heart became light. A warm comforting smile came over his face. He took off his moccasins and held them against his heart. He closed his eyes and dug his toes into the sandy path and began to walk. He walked and walked until he was sure he was beyond the fork in the path. Then he opened his eyes and began his journey again.

Whispering Wind had come to a time of decision and reached his “Time of Passing”... he was now... a “Pathfinder”. He didn’t need all the wisdom or warnings of the chief. He didn’t need the strong arm of his father pulling him along the way. The Great Spirit had also held back his council that Whispering Wind might find his own path. “He found it!” And that spirit of Whispering Wind walks today in the hearts of all Pathfinders.

You too, will be faced to make important choices ahead as you continue to grow, friends and neighbors, easy and hard choices will all be yours to make from the wisdom you have learned from those that have brought you this far. They will always be there for you, as you will always be Pals Forever-Friends Always, but you are now ready to choose some of those paths yourself.

(Emphasize the important step that the children are about to make in becoming Pathfinders. Emphasize the journey this far together with their parent with them here. Time for smiles, hugs & kisses with parents.)

The Story of the Faceless Doll

The Iroquois people have what they call the three sisters, the "sustainers of life. These sisters are called corn, beans, and squash. The corn Spirit was so thrilled at being one of the sustainers of life that she asked the Creator what more she could do for her people. The Creator said that a beautiful doll could be formed from the husks. The Creator set to work to form the doll. When finished he gave the doll a beautiful face, and sent it to the children of the Iroquois people to play with, and to make them happy. The doll went from village to village playing with the children and doing whatever she could for the children. Everywhere she went everyone would tell her how beautiful she was, so after a while she became vain.

The Creator spoke to her and explained that this was not the right kind of behavior, and she agreed not to be this way anymore. The Creator told her that if she continued with the behavior he would punish her, but he would not tell her how he would punish her. She agreed not to act that way again, and things went on as before. One afternoon she was walking by a creek and she glanced into the water. As she admired herself, she couldn't help thinking how beautiful she was, because indeed she was beautiful. At this time Creator sent a giant screech owl out of the sky and it snatched her reflection from the water. When she looked again, she had no reflection. This was the punishment the Creator put upon her. When an Iroquois Mother makes a doll for her child, she tells them that legend. It is wrong to think they are better than anyone else, and that the Creator has given a special gift to everyone.

How the Fly Saved the River

Many, many years ago when the world was new, there was a beautiful river. Fish in great numbers lived in this river, and its water was so pure and sweet that all the animals came there to drink. A giant moose heard about the river and he too came there to drink. But he was so big, and he drank so much, that soon the water began to sink lower and lower. The beavers were worried. The water around their lodges was disappearing. Soon their homes would be destroyed. The muskrats were worried, too. What would they do if the water vanished? How could they live? The fish were very worried.

The other animals could live on land if the water dried up, but they couldn't. All the animals tried to think of a way to drive the moose from the river, but he was so big that they were too afraid to try. Even the bear was afraid of him. At last the fly said he would try to drive the moose away. All the animals laughed and jeered. How could a tiny fly frighten a giant moose? The fly said nothing, but that day, as soon as the moose appeared, he went into action. He landed on the moose's foreleg and bit sharply. The moose stamped his foot harder, and each time he stamped, the ground sank and the water rushed in to fill it up. Then the fly jumped about all over the moose, biting and biting and biting until the moose was in a frenzy. He dashed madly about the banks of the river, shaking his head, stamping his feet, snorting and blowing, but he couldn't get rid of that pesky fly. At last the moose fled from the river, and didn't come back. The fly was very proud of his achievement, and boasted to the other animals, "Even the small can fight the strong if they use their brains to think."

How the Bear Lost His Tail

Back in the old days, Bear had a tail which was his proudest possession. It was long and black and glossy and Bear used to wave it around just so that people would look at it. Fox saw this. Fox, as everyone knows, is a trickster and likes nothing better than fooling others. So it was that he decided to play a trick on Bear. It was the time of year when Hatho, the Spirit of Frost, had swept across the land, covering the lakes with ice and pounding on the trees with his big hammer. Fox made a hole in the ice, right near a place where Bear liked to walk. By the time Bear came by, all around Fox, in a big circle, were big trout and fat perch. Just as Bear was about to ask Fox what he was doing, Fox twitched his tail which he had sticking through that hole in the ice and pulled out a huge trout.

"Greetings, Brother," said Fox. "How are you this fine day?" "Greetings," answered Bear, looking at the big circle of fat fish. "I am well, Brother. But what are you doing?" "I am fishing," answered Fox. "Would you like to try?" "Oh, yes," said Bear, as he started to lumber over to Fox's fishing hole.

But Fox stopped him. "Wait, Brother," he said, "This place will not be good. As you can see, I have already caught all the fish. Let us make you a new fishing spot where you can catch many big trout."

Bear agreed and so he followed Fox to the new place, a place where, as Fox knew very well, the lake was too shallow to catch the winter fish--which always stay in the deepest water when Hatho has covered their ponds. Bear watched as Fox made the hole in the ice, already tasting the fine fish he would soon catch. "Now," Fox said, "you must do just as I tell you. Clear your mind of all thoughts of fish. Do not even think of a song or the fish will hear you. Turn your back to the hole and place your tail inside it. Soon a fish will come and grab your tail and you can pull him out."

"But how will I know if a fish has grabbed my tail if my back is turned?" asked Bear. "I will hide over here where the fish cannot see me," said Fox. "When a fish grabs your tail, I will shout. Then you must pull as hard as you can to catch your fish. But you must be very patient. Do not move at all until I tell you."

Bear nodded, "I will do exactly as you say." He sat down next to the hole, placed his long beautiful black tail in the icy water and turned his back. Fox watched for a time to make sure that Bear was doing as he was told and then, very quietly, sneaked back to his own house and went to bed. The next morning he woke up and thought of Bear. "I wonder if he is still there," Fox said to himself. "I'll just go and check."

So Fox went back to the ice covered pond and what do you think he saw? He saw what looked like a little white hill in the middle of the ice. It had snowed during the night and covered Bear, who had fallen asleep while waiting for Fox to tell him to pull his tail and catch a fish. And Bear was snoring. His snores were so loud that the ice was shaking. It was so funny that Fox rolled with laughter. But when he was through laughing, he decided the time had come to wake up poor Bear. He crept very close to Bear's ear, took a deep breath, and then shouted: "Now, Bear!!!" Bear woke up with a start and pulled his long tail hard as he could. But his tail had been caught in the ice which had frozen over during the night and as he pulled, it broke off -- Whack! -- Just like that. Bear turned around to look at the fish he had caught and instead saw his long lovely tail caught in the ice.

"Ohhh," he moaned, "ohhh, Fox. I will get you for this." But Fox, even though he was laughing fit to kill was still faster than Bear and he leaped aside and was gone.

So it is that even to this day Bears have short tails and no love at all for Fox. And if you ever hear a bear moaning, it is probably because he remembers the trick Fox played on him long ago and he is mourning for his lost tail.

The First Butterflies (Ojibwa)

Long ago, when human twins were born to Spirit Woman, she relied on the animals to help her take care of them. All the animals loved the first human babies and did everything they could do to help them. The dog watched over them. The bear gave his fur to keep them warm. The wolf hunted for them. The doe provided them with milk. The beaver and the muskrat bathed them. The birds sang lullabies to them.

The dog was an excellent guardian. The twins had only to cry out and the dog jumped to his feet, his tail wagging. When he found out what was troubling the children, he set it right - or called someone else who could help. Did the babies need fresh moss to keep them comfortable? The dog appealed to the muskrat and the beaver. Were the babies hungry? The dog ran to the wolf, or to the doe who gave the babies her nourishing milk.

Were the flies bothering the infants? The dog asked the spider for help - or jumped and snapped at the pests until the babies laughed. When the babies wanted to be amused, the dog did his best tricks for them. He rolled over, he sat up, and he wagged his tail. He tickled the babies into delighted laughter by licking their noses. When the babies were quiet again, the dog sank down beside them and covered his eyes with his paws - to rest until he was needed again.

After a long time, it became clear that something was wrong with the children. The worried animals, who had been summoned by the bear, gathered round twins. "Brothers," said the bear, "the children cannot walk. They do not run and play as our young do. What can we do to help them?"

The wolf spoke first. "They eat the meat I bring them. They are not weak." The doe agreed. "Every day they drank milk." The beaver and the muskrat told the other animals that the twins waved their arms and legs with great strength at bath time. Indeed, they often splashed and splashed until the beaver and the muskrat were soaked and out of patience. Then the twins laughed as if they understood what they had done. They went on waving their arms and legs as the fish had taught them to do.

When Nanabush came to play with the children, the animals told him of their concern. Nanabush thought awhile and then he said, "You have cared for the children very well. In fact, you have cared for them so well that they never need to do anything for themselves. All little ones need to reach out for what they want instead of always having everything handed to them. I shall find out what we can do to help the babies learn to walk."

Nanabush journeyed far to the west, to the land of high mountains, where the cloudy peaks stretch up to the sky. From the towering heights, he called to the Great Spirit who was the creator of the children and had been watching over them. The Great Spirit would know what should be done to teach the children to walk. In reply to Nanabush's call, the Great Spirit told him to search along the slopes of the mountains. There he would find thousands of tiny sparkling stones. Nanabush did what the Great Spirit had said.

He collected hundreds of stones - blue ones and green ones and red ones and yellow ones. Soon he had a huge pile that gleamed through the clouds. Nanabush squatted beside the pile of colored stones and watched them for a long while - but nothing happened. At last Nanabush grew bored and restless and began to toss the stones, one after another, into the air. As the stones fell back to earth, he caught them.

Then he tossed a handful of stones into the air, catching them as they fell back. He threw a second handful, but this time nothing dropped back into his outstretched hands. Nanabush looked up. To his astonishment, he saw the pebbles changing into winged creatures of many colors and shapes.

The beautiful creatures fluttered here and there before they came to nestle on Nanabush's shoulders. Soon, he was surrounded by clouds of shifting colors. These were the first butterflies. The butterflies followed Nanabush back to the twins, who crowed with pleasure and waved their legs and stretched out their arms to the beautiful creatures. But the butterflies always fluttered just beyond the grasp of the small, outstretched hands. Soon the twins began to crawl, and then to walk, and even to run in their efforts to catch the butterflies.