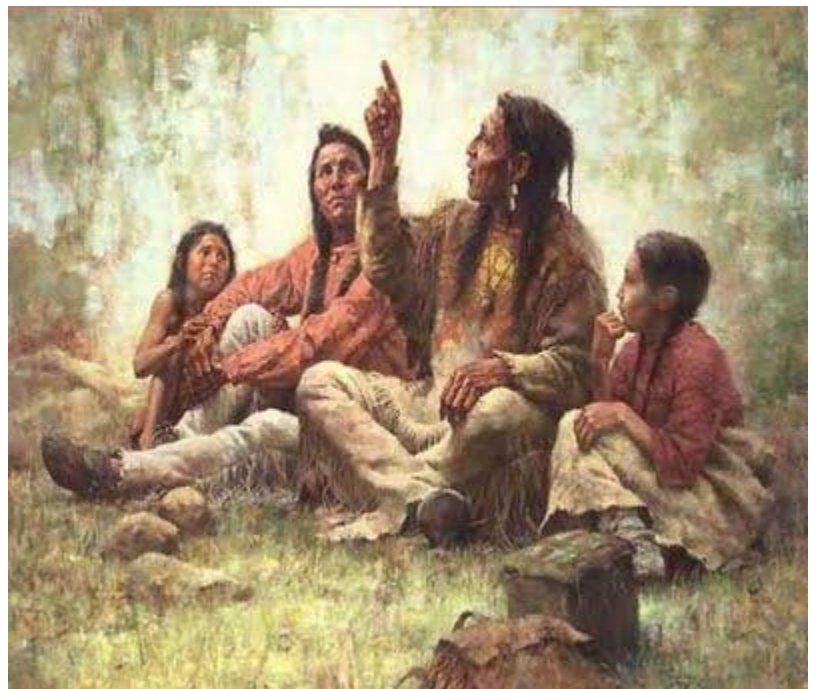


Name:

NATIVE AMERICAN TRICKSTER TALES



Coyote and the Columbia

From the Sahaptin/Salishan Tribes

Retold By: S. E. Schlosser

One day, Coyote was walking along. The sun was shining brightly, and Coyote felt very hot.

"I would like a cloud," Coyote said.

So a cloud came and made some shade for Coyote. Coyote was not satisfied.

"I would like more clouds," he said. More clouds came along, and the sky began to look very stormy. But Coyote was still hot.

"How about some rain," said Coyote. The clouds began to sprinkle rain on Coyote.

"More rain," Coyote demanded. The rain became a downpour.

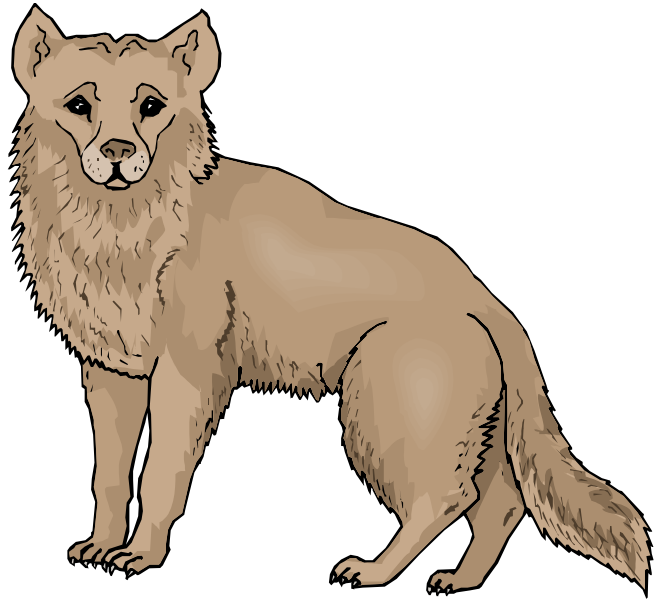
"I would like a creek to put my feet in," said Coyote. So a creek sprang up beside him, and Coyote walked in it to cool off his feet.

"It should be deeper," said Coyote.

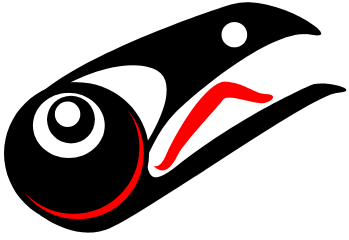
The creek became a huge, swirling river. Coyote was swept over and over by the water. Finally, nearly drowned, Coyote was thrown up on the bank far away. When he woke up, the buzzards were watching him, trying to decide if he was dead.

"I'm not dead," Coyote told them, and they flew away.

That is how the Columbia River began.



End



Crow Brings the Daylight

An Inuit Myth

Retold By: S. E. Schlosser

Long, long ago, when the world was still new, the Inuit lived in darkness in their home in the fastness of the north. They had never heard of daylight, and when it was first explained to them by Crow, who traveled back and forth between the northlands and the south, they did not believe him.

Yet many of the younger folk were fascinated by the story of the light that gilded the lands to the south. They made Crow repeat his tales until they knew them by heart.

"Imagine how far and how long we could hunt," they told one another.

"Yes, and see the polar bear before it attacks," others agreed.

Soon the yearning for daylight was so strong that the Inuit people begged Crow to bring it to them. Crow shook his head. "I am too old," he told them. "The daylight is very far away. I can no longer go so far." But the pleadings of the people made him reconsider, and finally he agreed to make the long journey to the south.

Crow flew for many miles through the endless dark of the north. He grew weary many times, and almost turned back. But at last he saw a rim of light at the very edge of horizon and knew that the daylight was close.

Crow strained his wings and flew with all his might. Suddenly, the daylight world burst upon him with all its glory and brilliance. The endless shades of color and the many shapes and forms surrounding him made Crow stare and stare. He flapped down to a tree and rested himself, exhausted by his long journey. Above him, the sky was an endless blue, the clouds fluffy and white. Crow could not get enough of the wonderful scene.

Eventually Crow lowered his gaze and realized that he was near a village that lay beside a wide river. As he watched, a beautiful girl came to the river near the tree in which he perched. She dipped a large bucket into the icy waters of the river and then turned to make her way back to the village. Crow turned himself into a tiny speck of dust and drifted down towards the girl as she



passed beneath his tree. He settled into her fur cloak and watched carefully as she returned to the snow lodge of her father, who was the chief of the village people.

It was warm and cozy inside the lodge. Crow looked around him and spotted a box that glowed around the edges. Daylight, he thought. On the floor, a little boy was playing contentedly. The speck of dust that was Crow drifted away from the girl and floated into the ear of the little boy. Immediately the child sat up and rubbed at his ear, which was irritated by the strange speck. He started to cry, and the chief, who was a doting grandfather, came running into the snow lodge to see what was wrong.

"Why are you crying?" the chief asked, kneeling beside the child.

Inside the little boy's ear, Crow whispered: "You want to play with a ball of daylight." The little boy rubbed at his ear and then repeated Crow's words.

The chief sent his daughter to the glowing box in the corner. She brought it to her father, who removed a glowing ball, tied it with a string, and gave it to the little boy. He rubbed his ear thoughtfully before taking the ball. It was full of light and shadow, color and form. The child laughed happily, tugging at the string and watching the ball bounce.

Then Crow scratched the inside of his ear again and the little boy gasped and cried.

"Don't cry, little one," said the doting grandfather anxiously. "Tell me what is wrong."

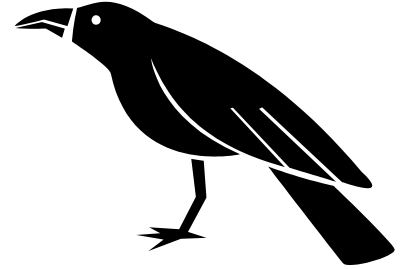
Inside the boy's ear, Crow whispered: "You want to go outside to play." The boy rubbed at his ear and then repeated Crow's words to his grandfather. Immediately, the chief lifted up the small child and carried him outside, followed by his worried mother.

As soon as they were free of the snow lodge, Crow swooped out of the child's ear and resumed his natural form. He dove toward the little boy's hand and grabbed the string from him. Then he rose up and up into the endless blue sky, the ball of daylight sailing along behind him.

In the far north, the Inuit saw a spark of light coming toward them through the darkness. It grew brighter and brighter, until they could see Crow flapping his wings as he flew toward them. The people gasped and pointed and called in delight.

The Crow dropped the ball, and it shattered upon the ground, releasing the daylight so that it exploded up and out, illuminating every dark place and chasing away every shadow. The sky grew bright and turned blue. The dark mountains took on color and light and form. The snow and ice sparkled so brightly that the Inuit had to shade their eyes.

The people laughed and cried and exclaimed over their good fortune. But Crow told them that the daylight would not last forever. He had only obtained one ball of daylight from the people of the south, and it would need to rest for six months every year to regain its strength. During that six month period, the darkness would return.



The people said: "Half a year of daylight is enough. Before you brought the daylight, we lived our whole life in darkness!" Then they thanked Crow over and over again.

To this day, the Inuit live for half a year in darkness and half a year in daylight. And they are always kind to Crow, for it was he who brought them the light.

End

Rabbit Plays Tug-of-War

A Native American Legend

(Creek/Muscogee Tribe)

Retold By: S. E. Schlosser

Now Rabbit had a favorite place on the river where he always went to drink water. It was on a bend in the river, and two Snakes lived there, one on the upper side of the bend and one on the lower. Rabbit soon learned that neither of the Snakes knew that the other Snake lived there.

Ho, ho, ho, thought Rabbit. I am going to have a bit of fun!

Rabbit went to the Snake that lived on the upper bend of the river. "I am a very strong Rabbit," he told the Snake. "I bet I can pull you right out of the water."

"I bet you can't!" said the Snake, who was very strong indeed.

"I will go get a grape vine," said Rabbit. "You will pull one end and I will pull the other. "If I pull you out of the water, I win the contest. If you pull me into the water, then I win."

The Snake on the upper bend agreed. Then Rabbit went to the Snake on the lower bend and made the same deal. He told both Snakes that he would be standing out of sight on top of the river bank and would give a whoop when he was in place and ready to start the contest. Both Snakes were pleased with the arrangement. They were sure they would win against such a feeble little Rabbit.

Rabbit took a long grape vine and strung it across the wide bend in the river. He handed one end to the first Snake and the other end to the second Snake. Then he gave a loud whoop from the middle of the river bank and the two Snakes started tugging and pulling with all their might.

"That Rabbit is really strong," thought the Snake on the upper bank. He would tug and tug and the vine would come a little closer to him and then he would nearly be pulled out of the water.



"My, Rabbit is much stronger than he appears," thought the Snake on the lower bank after he was almost hurled out of the water by an extra strong pull from up the river.

Rabbit sat on the bank above both Snakes and laughed and laughed. The Snakes heard him laughing and realized that they had been fooled. Letting go of the rope, they swam to the middle of the bend and met each other for the first time.

Both Snakes were angry with Rabbit for making them look foolish. They agreed that Rabbit could no longer drink from his favorite place on the river bend where they lived. In spite of his protests, they sent Rabbit away and would not let him come down to the riverbank anymore. So whenever Rabbit grew thirsty, he had to turn himself into a faun in order to get a drink from the river.

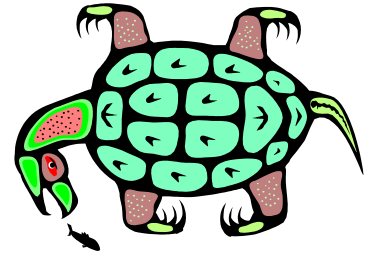
After that, Rabbit decided not to play any more jokes on Snakes.

END



A Terrapin is a fresh water turtle.

The Trickster Tricked



A Native American Legend
(Creek/Muscogee Tribe)

Retold By: S. E. Schlosser

Rabbit and Terrapin met near the stream one morning. It was a lovely clear day, and they both basked in the warm sunshine and swapped some stories. Rabbit started boasting that he was the fastest runner in the world. Terrapin wasn't having any of that! No sir!

"I bet I can beat you in a race," Terrapin said to Rabbit. Rabbit laughed and laughed at the idea.

"You crawl so slow you hardly look like you are moving," Rabbit said. "You'll never beat me!"

Terrapin was mad now. "I will win the race. You meet me tomorrow morning right here," said he. "I will wear a white feather on my head so you can see me in the tall grass. We will run over four hills, and the first one to reach the stake at the top of the fourth hill will be the winner."

Rabbit laughed again and said: "That will be me! I will see you tomorrow for the race!" Then Rabbit hopped off, still chuckling to himself.

Terrapin was in a bind now. He knew he could not run faster than Rabbit. But he had an idea. He gathered all of his family and told them that their honor was at stake. When they heard about the race, the other turtles agreed to help him.

Terrapin gave each of his family members a white feather, and placed them at various stages along the route of the race. The first was at the top of the first hill, the second in the valley, the third at the top of the second hill, and so on. Then Terrapin placed himself at the top of the fourth hill next to the winner's stake.

The next morning, Rabbit came down to the stream and found Terrapin with his white feather waiting at the starting line. "Ready, set, go!" said the Rabbit and he ran up and up the first hill. The Terrapin with the white feather started crawling along behind him. As soon as Rabbit was out of sight, he disappeared into the bushes.

As Rabbit reached the top of the first hill, he saw ahead of him Terrapin with his white feather crawling as fast as it could go down into the valley. Rabbit was amazed. He put on a burst of speed and passed the Terrapin with the white feather. As soon as Rabbit had his back turned, the second Terrapin took off the white feather and crawled into the bushes, chuckling to himself.

When Rabbit reached the valley floor, there was Terrapin ahead of him again, crawling up the second hill with his white feather. Rabbit ran and ran, leaving Terrapin far behind him. But every time he reached a hilltop or a valley, there was Terrapin again with his white feather, crawling along as fast as he could go!

Rabbit was gasping for breathe when he reached the bottom of the third valley. He had passed Terrapin yet again at the top of the third hill, but here was that rascally turtle appearing on the racetrack ahead of him, crawling as fast as he could go up the slope of the fourth hill.

Rabbit was determined to win the race, so he plucked up the last few ounces of his strength and sprinted up the hill, passing the Terrapin with the white feather. He was nearly there! Rabbit rounded the last corner and braked to a halt in astonishment. Sitting by the stake, waving his white feather proudly, was Terrapin. He had won the race!



End



A Menomini Legend

While Manabozho was once walking along a lake shore, tired and hungry, he observed a long, narrow sandbar, which extended far out into the water, around which were myriads of waterfowl, so Manabozho decided to have a feast.

He had with him only his medicine bag; so he entered the brush and hung it upon a tree, now called "Manabozho tree," and procured a quantity of bark, which he rolled into a bundle and placing it upon his back, returned to the shore, where he pretended to pass slowly by in sight of the birds. Some of the Swans and Ducks, however, recognizing Manabozho and becoming frightened, moved away from the shore.

One of the Swans called out, "Ho! Manabozho, where are you going?" To this Manabozho replied, "I am going to have a song. As you may see, I have all my songs with me." Manabozho then called out to the birds, "Come to me, my brothers, and let us sing and dance." The birds assented and returned to the shore, when all retreated a short distance away from the lake to an open space where they might dance.

Manabozho removed the bundle of bark from his back and placed it on the ground, got out his singing-sticks, and said to the birds, "Now, all of you dance around me as I drum; sing as loudly as you can, and keep your eyes closed. The first one to open his eyes will forever have them red and sore."

Manabozho began to beat time upon his bundle of bark, while the birds, with eyes closed, circled around him singing as loudly as they could. Keeping time with one hand, Manabozho suddenly grasped the neck of a Swan, which he broke; but before he had killed the bird it screamed out, whereupon Manabozho said, "That's right, brothers, sing as loudly as you can." Soon another Swan fell a victim; then a Goose, and so on until the number of birds was greatly reduced.

Then the "Hell-diver," opening his eyes to see why there was less singing than at first, and beholding Manabozho and the heap of victims, cried out, "Manabozho is killing us! Manabozho is killing us!" and immediately ran to the water, followed by the remainder of the birds.

As the "Hell-diver" was a poor runner, Manabozho soon overtook him, and said, "I won't kill you, but you shall always have red eyes and be the laughing-stock of all the birds." With this he gave the bird a kick, sending him far out into the lake and knocking off his tail, so that the "Hell-diver" is red-eyed and tailless to this day.

Manabozho then gathered up his birds, and taking them out upon the sandbar buried them--some with their heads protruding, others with the feet sticking out of the sand. He then built a fire to cook the game, but as this would require some time, and as Manabozho was tired after his exertion, he stretched himself on the ground to sleep. In order to be informed if anyone approached, he slapped his thigh and said to it, "You watch the birds, and awaken me if anyone should come near them." Then, with his back to the fire, he fell asleep.

After awhile a party of Indians came along in their canoes, and seeing the feast in store, went to the sandbar and pulled out every bird which Manabozho had so carefully placed there, but put back the heads and feet in such a way that there was no indication that the bodies had been disturbed. When the Indians had finished eating they departed, taking with them all the food that remained from the feast.

Some time afterward, Manabozho awoke, and, being very hungry, bethought himself to enjoy the fruits of his stratagem. In attempting to pull a baked swan from the sand he found nothing but the head and neck, which he held in his hand. Then he tried another, and found the body of that bird also gone. So he tried another, and then another, but each time met with disappointment. Who could have robbed him? he thought. He struck his thigh and asked, "Who has been here to rob me of my feast; did I not command you to watch while I slept?"

His thigh responded, "I also fell asleep, as I was very tired; but I see some people moving rapidly away in their canoes; perhaps they were the thieves. I see also they are very dirty and poorly dressed." Then Manabozho ran out to the point of the sandbar, and beheld the people in their canoes, just disappearing around a point of land. Then he called to them and reviled them, calling them "Winnibe'go! Winnibe'go! " And by this term the Menomini have ever since designated their thievish neighbors.

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END