

NATIVE AMERICAN LEGENDS-

Most Native American tribes have a long tradition of telling stories about their history and beliefs. Creation stories show the spiritual relationship of Native Americas to the living environment. The myths of origin and animal spirit legends were used to explain natural phenomena. These stories weren't written down, but were passed down orally from generation to generation. The following are seven of the most popular legends.

1. **Creation Story (Powhatan)**- There were five main gods in the world. The leader of the gods was the Great Hare. The other four gods were the winds from each corner of the earth. One day the Great Hare created people. He made a number of people and animals. He wasn't sure what to do with them so he put them into a large bag. He wanted to make a place for them to live, so he made the forests, rivers, and lakes. He created deer to live in the forests. The other four gods, however, weren't happy with what the Great Hare had made. They went into the forests and killed the deer. When the Great Hare found the dead deer, he was saddened. He tossed the skins of the deer throughout the forest and many more deer sprang to life. He then let the people out of the bag and spread them around the forest to live together with the deer.
2. **Coyote Spills the Stars (Cochiti)**- In the beginning days when all came up from the underworld a huge gathering was planned, uniting all the four-leggeds and flyers. At this meeting Our Mother selected a human being to take a jar of stars, hang them in the sky and name them for all to enjoy. Coyote was very interested in what was going on, but being a wiggler and trickster then as he is no, Our Mother turned to him and said "Do not make mischief here!" The human being was busy, placing the stars in ordered patterns upon the sky. While everyone including Our Mother was gathered to gaze at the luminous Morning Star, Coyote tiptoed over to the jar of stars to see for himself what the man was doing. As he lifted the jar's lid just a little, the stars rose to the occasion, pushed the lid away and raced for the sky. This is the reason so many twinkle without order or pattern, and why so many are not named.
3. **Corn Legend (Omaha)**- A man wandering around found some kernels of corn colored red, blue and white. He knew right away these were of value, so he buried them in a dirt mound. One day he thought it was time to check on his treasured kernels, but what he found instead were tall stalks with ears of corn bearing the colors of the kernels he had found. He took an ear of each color and gave the rest to his people for them to experiment with. They tried it as food and thought it was so good that it would become the root of life. Knowing corn was good and served as life to the people, they took the shoulder bone of an elk to dig mounds and plant kernels like the ones that had provided the ears of corn. Soon the people had plenty of corn and were never hungry again.
4. **Sacred Medicine Water (Caddo)**- The favor of the Great Spirit rested on the abundant forest, flowers, songbirds, and small animals of these quiet hills. Then a fierce dragon devastated the land, bringing disease and hunger on the people. The Indian Nations pleaded with the Great Spirit to subdue the dragon, and the might of all the heavenly forces contrived to bury it deep under the mountain, where it shakes the earth even today. Once the Great Spirit had reclaimed his beautiful resting spot, he caused pure water to gush from the earth, and asked that his favorite place be held neutral ground, so all can share in the healing waters.
5. **Why Fire Belongs to Man (Alabama)**- When the earth was young, Fire was owned by Bear. Bear carried fire with him wherever he went. When it was cold, Fire kept Bear and his family warm. When it was dark, Fire lit the way. One day, Bear and his family arrived at a forest. Bear put Fire down at the edge of the forest while he and his family went to explore. Soon Bear found that this forest had the best acorns he had ever tasted. Bear and his family moved deeper into the forest to find more acorns. They ate and ate and didn't stop. At the same time, Fire was running out of wood. Fire cried out to Bear "Come back and feed me!", but Bear was too far into the woods. Just then Man came along. He asked Fire if he could help. Fire told him to bring him wood and sticks. Man placed sticks on Fire and soon Fire was blazing again, happy to have plenty of wood to burn. Man enjoyed Fire's light and warmth. They were happy together. When Bear finally returned, Fire drove him away and now Fire belongs only to Man.

6. The Thunder Beings (Cherokee)- Far in the sky to the west lived the god of thunder, Great Thunder, and his sons, the Thunder Boys. They caused lightning and thunder to rain down on the earth, but they also brought rain for the crops and the rainbow. The medicine men of the tribes prayed that the Thunders would bring soft rains for their crops and not harm the people of the tribe with their lightning.

7. How People Got Different Languages (Blackfoot)- One day a great flood moved through the land of the Blackfoot covering everything. All the people gathered at the top of the tallest mountain. The Great Spirit, or "Old Man", appeared on the mountain and turned the water into different colors. He had each group of people drink a different color of water. They all began to speak different languages. The Blackfoot drank the black water and spoke the Blackfoot language.