

Coyote and Sun

A Paiute Legend

Along time ago, Coyote wanted to go to the sun. He asked Pokoh, Old Man, to show him the trail. Coyote went straight out on this trail and he traveled it all day.

But Sun went round so that Coyote came back at night to the place from which he started in the morning.

The next morning, Coyote asked Pokoh to show him the trail. Pokoh showed him, and Coyote traveled all day and came back at night to the same place again.

But the third day, Coyote started early and went out on the trail to the edge of the world and sat down on the hole where the sun came up. While waiting for the sun he pointed with his bow and arrow at different places and pretended to shoot. He also pretended not to see the sun. When Sun came up, he told Coyote to get out of his way.

Coyote told him to go around; that it was his trail. But Sun came up under him and he had to hitch forward a little. After Sun came up a little farther, it began to get hot on Coyote's shoulder, so he spit on his paw and rubbed his shoulder.

Then he wanted to ride up with the sun. Sun said, "Oh, no"; but Coyote insisted. So Coyote climbed up on Sun, and Sun started up the trail in the sky. The trail was marked off into steps like a ladder. As Sun went up he counted "one, two, three," and so on. By and by Coyote became very thirsty, and he asked Sun for a drink of water.

Sun gave him an acorn-cup full. Coyote asked him why he had no more. About noontime, Coyote became very impatient. It was very hot. Sun told him to shut his eyes. Coyote shut them, but opened them again. He kept opening and shutting them all the afternoon.

At night, when Sun came down, Coyote took hold of a tree. Then he clambered off Sun and climbed down to the Earth.

Navajo - Coyote Loses His Eyes

Coyote was walking along one day when he saw some small birds playing a game. They were sliding down a hillside on a rock. As they slid they removed their eyes and tossed them up into the treetops.

Then they said, "My eyes, come back," and the eyes returned to them.

Coyote watched them for a long time. He decided he wanted to play that game.

He trotted over to the players and said, "I want to play that game, too. Please take my eyes out."

"No," they all said, and went on playing.

Coyote kept begging to be allowed to play. The fourth time he asked them they said he could play.

They removed his eyes and handed them to him. As he slid down the hillside he tossed them into a tree. Then he called out, "My eyes, come back to me."

They came back into his hands. Coyote was very excited and wanted to play again.

The small birds warned him, but he wouldn't listen; and the fourth time he slid down the hill the eyes did not come back when he called to them.

"Where are my eyes?" he cried. "Tell me, where are my eyes? I can't go anywhere without eyes."

"We warned you not to play this game," the birds told him, but they felt sorry for him.

"We could make him some eyes," one of them said. "Let's go get some pitch."

They went to the forest and gathered pitch from pine "trees,, and they pressed it into Coyote's empty eye sockets.

After a while. Coyote could see again. And he disappeared, happy that he could use his new eyes.

Not far away, some people were celebrating and feasting. Coyote, who was hungry, swiftly approached the crowd and asked to help cook the food. They agreed; so he joined the people and assisted with the cooking. In that way he hoped to get something good to eat.

As he went close to the fire, however, his eyes began to melt. He became worried and tried to keep away from the heat. But the people urged him to stay near the fire so that he could help cook.

Coyote faced away from the flames while he tried to turn the meat cooking in the hot coals, and he grabbed a red hot piece of wood, burning his hand. He dropped the coal and yelled.

The people wondered why Coyote was afraid to get near the fire and why he picked up a hot coal. Then they noticed that Coyote's yellow shining eyes were made of yellow pine pitch, and Coyote jumped away from the people and ran off.

That is why coyotes even today have yellow eyes.

Wolf Tricks the Trickster

A Shoshone Legend

The Shoshoni people saw the Wolf as a creator God and they respected him greatly. Long ago, Wolf, and many other animals, walked and talked like man.

Coyote could talk, too, but the Shoshoni people kept far away from him because he was a trickster, somebody who is always up to no good and out to double-cross you.

Coyote resented Wolf because he was greatly respected by the Shoshoni. Being a devious Trickster, Coyote decided it was time to teach Wolf a lesson. He would make the Shoshoni people dislike Wolf, and he had the perfect plan. Or so he thought.

One day, Wolf and Coyote were discussing the people of the land. Wolf claimed that if somebody were to die, he could bring them back to life by shooting an arrow under them. Coyote had heard this boast before and decided to put his plan into action.

Wearing his most innocent smile he told Wolf that if he brought everyone back to life, there would soon be no room left on Earth. Once people die, said Coyote, they should remain dead.

If Wolf takes my advice, thought Coyote, then the Shoshoni people would hate Wolf, once and for all.

Wolf was getting tired of Coyote constantly questioning his wisdom and knew he was up to no good, but he didn't say anything. He just nodded wisely and decided it was time to teach Coyote a lesson.

A few days after their conversation, Coyote came running to Wolf. Coyote's fur was ruffled and his eyes were wide with panic.

Wolf already knew what was wrong; Coyote's son had been bitten by Rattlesnake and no animal can survive the snake's powerful venom.

Coyote pleaded with Wolf to bring his son back to life by shooting an arrow under him, as he claimed he could do.

Wolf reminded Coyote of his own remark that people should remain dead. He was no longer going to bring people back to life, as Coyote had suggested.

The Shoshoni people say that was the day Death came to the land and that, as a punishment for his mischievous ways, Coyote's son was the first to die.

No one else was ever raised from the dead by Wolf again, and the people came to know sadness when someone dies. Despite Coyote's efforts, however, the Shoshoni didn't hate Wolf. Instead, they admired his strength, wisdom and power, and they still do today.

Ute Creation Story

In the ancient times only Sinawav, the Creator and Coyote lived on the earth. They had come out of the light so long ago, that no one remembered when or how. The Earth was young and the time had come to increase the people. Sinawav gave a bag of sticks to Coyote and said "Carry these over the far hills to the valleys beyond." He gave specific directions Coyote was to follow and told him what to do when he got there. "You must remember, this is a great responsibility. The bag must not be opened under any circumstances until you reach the sacred grounds."

"What is this I carry?" asked Coyote

"I will say no more. Now be about your task" Sinawav answered.

Coyote was young and foolish, consumed with curiosity. "What is this I carry?" he kept asking himself.

As soon as he was over the first hill and out of sight, he stopped. He was just going to peek in the bag. "That could hurt nothing." He thought. Just as he untied the bag and opened a small slit they rushed for the opening. They were people. These people yelled and hollered in strange languages of all kinds. He tried to catch them and get them back into the bag. But they ran away in all different directions. From how full the bag was after he had gotten it closed he could tell there was only a fraction of what he had started out with. He went to the sacred valley and dumped them out there. There was a small number of these people. But those few ones were the Utes, the real Utes from around here.

Coyote then returned and told Sinawav that he had completed the task. Sinawav searched Coyote's face. "I know," Sinawav sighed. "You foolish thing, you do not know what a fearful thing you have done."

Coyote finally confessed. "I tried to catch them. I was frightened. They spoke in strange tongues that I could not understand."

"Those you let escape will forever war with the chosen ones, They will be the tribes which will always be a thorn in the sides of the Utes," said Sinawav.

"The Utes, even though they are few in number, will be the mightiest and most valiant of heart."

Sinawav then cursed the Coyote "You are an irresponsible meddler. From this time on you are doomed to wander this earth on all fours forever as a night crawler."