Coyote Arranges the Seasons

The Indian Reading Series

Level V Book 12
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Stories and legends of the Northwest

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In early times the sun was hot. Often it scorched the earth and people were uncomfortable. "I could be a better sun." Coyote thought to himself. "I will take the sun's place."
So Coyote tried to catch the sun. He traveled west to seize it but when he got there, the sun dropped out of sight. Coyote traveled east to meet the sun but when he got there, it was high over his head. He made a boat and traveled east by water but when he got there, the sun was in the middle of the sky.
At last, Coyote went to Frog with his problem. "Help me get hold of the sun," Coyote said.

Frog said, "You throw me against the sun, I'll grab it with my hands and bring it down to earth."
Coyote took hold of Frog and threw him with all his might at the sun. Frog began his journey to try and seize the sun to pull it down to earth.
While Frog was on his journey to the sky, Coyote planned what he would say upon Frog's return. Coyote used his special powers and made some places to show the sun. When Frog came back Coyote welcomed the sun warmly.
“I am very glad to see you and talk with you,” Coyote said. “Your father and my father once camped near here. Would you like to see the place where they camped?”
Coyote led the sun to a good camping place, scraped off the earth and showed the sun the ashes of an old campfire. He pointed to five old tepee poles. "Our fathers lived in this tepee," said Coyote.
Coyote led the sun to the remains of a sweatlodge on the river bank. The framework of willows was still standing. The rocks which had been heated for the sweat baths were also there.

The sun was convinced their fathers had been friends and he was willing to be Coyote's friend. The sun decided it was all right to camp with Coyote.
Coyote, however, planned to kill the sun as soon as he was asleep. Occasionally Coyote would look over at his companion expecting to find him sleeping. But the sun was always awake. He always had his eyes wide open, just as in the daytime.
Coyote kept his plan to kill the sun. He made a big knife and hid it under himself. He knew the knife was not good enough and waited a few more nights. He slipped away from the sun during the day and made another knife from flint.
Each time the two lay down to sleep, Coyote kept watching for his chance. Sun would lay with his eyes open. Finally, one time the sun was looking in another direction, Coyote took his flint and cut off the sun's head.
Coyote went up to the sky and became the sun. He found he did not like to spend all of his days traveling across the sky. Coyote said, "I'll have to put the sun's head beside his body. I'll straddle him three times and he will come back to life."
That’s what Coyote did. After stepping three times across the body and head, they grew back together. The sun came to life. He yawned and stretched.

“Oh, I have enjoyed my rest,” the sun said. “I’m not going to work so hard again.”
"That's right," replied Coyote. "I'm not going to let you. I am going to divide the year into four seasons. You will never again be as hot as you used to be. You will be warm in summer but not scorching hot. Winter will be your time to rest. Spring will be a middle season when you will be getting yourself ready for summer again."
All the seasons were happy except Winter. Winter was not satisfied because he thought he should control a longer part of the year than Summer. Winter challenged Summer and his four brothers to a wrestling match. Winter won and all of Summer’s brothers were killed. The earth became very cold for a long time.
One of Summer’s brothers left a baby son. The baby’s mother and grandmother took him south to live. When the baby grew to boyhood he often asked about his father. His mother would not answer him. “Where is my father?” he would ask. But his mother would not reply.
The boy's mother encouraged him to become strong. Everyday the boy took a sweat bath in the sweatlodge so he would obtain the power of heat. From the sweat bath the boy plunged into the river so he would obtain the power of cold. When he became a young man he was very strong and had special powers. These powers were heat and cold. One day the young man said to his mother, "I think I am prepared to meet anyone and anything."
The young man's mother was glad. "Now I will tell you about your father," she said. She told him about the wrestling match between the five winter brothers and the five summer brothers.
The mother’s story made the young man eager for revenge. He called the five winter brothers to a wrestling match. One at a time the young man fought them. He overcame the eldest brother and cut off his head. He overcame the second brother and cut off his head. He also killed the third and fourth winter brothers. The young man let the youngest brother remain alive.
Booklets available in the Level IV sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the Planned Sequence of use in the Teacher’s Manual. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest are included in the Levels I, II and III sequences.

1. Warm Springs Animal Stories
   The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

2. Snail Women at Sqw’ale
   The Suquamish Tribe of the Port Madison Reservation

3. Blue Jay – Star Child/Basket Woman
   Muckleshoot Tribe

4. Assiniboine Woman Making Grease
   Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation

5. Coyote
   The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

6. How the Summer Season Came
   Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap Reservation

7. Little Weasel’s Dream
   Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

8. Fort Hall Stories
   Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

9. The Bear Tepee
   Northern Cheyenne Tribe

10. Sioux Stories and Legends
    Sioux Tribe of the Fort Peck Reservation

11. Kootenai Stories
    Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

12. Chief Mountain’s Medicine
    Gros Ventre Tribe from the Fort Belknap Reservation

13. Coyote the Trickster
    Burns Paiute Reservation

14. Running Free
    Shoalwater Bay

15. Salish Coyote Stories
    Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

16. Coyote and the Cowboys
    Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

17. Napi’s Journey
    Blackfeet Tribe

18. Warm Springs Stories
    The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

19. Tepee Making
    Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

20. Baskets and Canoes
    Skokomish Tribe

21. Warrior People
    Blackfeet Tribe