

Northwest Creation Story

Raven was so lonely. One day he paced back and forth on the sandy beach feeling quite forlorn. Except for the trees, the moon, the sun, water and a few animals, the world was empty. His heart wished for the company of other creatures. Suddenly a large clam pushed through the sand making an eerie bubbling sound. Raven watched and listened intently as the clam slowly opened up. He was surprised and happy to see tiny people emerging from the shell. All were talking, smiling, and shaking the sand off their tiny bodies. Men, women, and children spread around the island. Raven was pleased and proud with his work. He sang a beautiful song of great joy and greeting. He had brought the first people to the world.

Salish: The ancients all had greater powers and cunning than either animals or people. Besides the ancients, real people lived on the earth at that time. Old One made the people out of the last balls of mud he took from the earth. They were so ignorant that they were the most helpless of all the creatures Old One had made.

The difficulty with the early world was that most of the ancients were selfish, and they were also very stupid in some ways. They did not know which creatures were deer and which were people, and sometimes they ate people by mistake.

At last Old One said, "There will soon be no people if I let things go on like this." So he sent Coyote to teach the Indians how to do things. And Coyote began to travel on the earth, teaching the Indians, making life easier and better for them, and performing many wonderful deeds.

Iroquois: The Iroquois trace the beginning of human life to a time when Skywoman fell to an island created by a giant turtle. The island grew in shape and size and

became North America. There, Skywoman gave birth to a daughter whose children propagated the human race.

Penobscot: When Kloskurbeh, the All-Maker, lived on earth, there were no people yet. But one day a youth appeared, born from the foam of the waves, and became his chief helper. After these two beings had created all manner of things, there came to them a beautiful girl. She was born of the wonderful earth plant, and of the dew, and of warmth. First Mother (as she was called) married the chief helper of Kloskurbeh. When their children multiplied until there was not enough game to feed them all, First Mother made her husband kill her. Then he and his children dragged her body back and forth across a barren plot of land, as she had ordered, and buried her bones in the center of the field. Seven months later they returned and found the field green with ripe corn and, in the center, fragrant tobacco.

Tewa/Hopi: Way back in the distant past, the ancestors of humans were living down below in a world under the earth. They weren't humans yet, they lived in darkness, behaving like bugs. Now there was a Great Spirit watching over everything; some people say he was the sun. He saw how things were down under the earth, so he sent his messenger, Spider Old Woman, to talk to them. She said, "You creatures, the Sun Spirit doesn't want you living like this. He is going to transform you into something better, and I will lead you to another world." When they came out on the surface of the earth, that's when they became humans. In the journeys that followed, they were looking for a place of harmony where they could follow good teachings and a good way of life.