

HOW FIRE CAME TO EARTH

This story again comes from the East side of the mountains. It is told by many of the tribes over there in different ways. But it speaks of a time, that a long, long time ago, there was no fire in the world. There was no fire. Now fire is a powerful and mysterious thing. It comes out of nowhere, it comes out of stone, it comes out of wood. But how does it come to be. Very mysterious and very powerful. We need fire though. We need fire to cook our food and to stay warm. We need fire to light the world so we can see. We need fire, but where does it come from? One thing about fire is that you can have too much fire. You can get too hot and you can burn. But if you don't have enough fire, you'll get cold and you can die. So, fire is very powerful, fire is very mysterious. Where does it come from? How does it work? How did it come into the world? So, the story explains this.

Again, a long time ago, there was no fire in the world. The world was dark and it was cold. The animal people were always hungry. They were always shivering and cold. They couldn't see where they were going. The world was covered in darkness. There was no fire. Coyote looked at this and Coyote knew the world needed fire. And he knew fire was mysterious and powerful and he knew it existed in the sky world, that the people in the sky world had fire. So, Coyote pointed up into the sky and told all the animals, "We need to go into the sky world and get fire and return it to the earth so the earth can be a better place." But how could they get to the sky world? While all the animals thought about it, Coyote said we will shoot arrows into the sky world. Coyote, himself, went first and shot an arrow into the sky world. But the arrow fell short of the sky and fell back to earth. Other animals came forward. The biggest and strongest. All the animals came forward and they shot arrows into the sky. But all of them fell back to the earth. Finally, Beaver came forward and using a very special bow made out of a rib of another animal, he shot an arrow into the sky and it went up, up, up and it stuck into the sky world. The bottom of the sky world. Then he took another arrow, this beaver, and he shot it into the air. And it hit the bottom of the first arrow. Then he shot another one that hit the bottom of that arrow. He kept shooting arrows until he shot five quivers of arrows and now, he created a ladder of arrows that extended from the sky world to the earth. Then all the animals started climbing up that

ladder. That ladder made of arrows. They started climbing to the sky world. Dog went first and he climbed faster than everyone. He got to the sky world and he dug a hole through the bottom of the sky world, and he climbed into the sky world. The other animals waited to see what Dog would say, he was like a scout. He went ahead and he loved the sky world. There was plenty. There was all this food, all this water, all these plants, everything in the sky world. It was a much better place than the earth below. And Dog liked it there and he started to search for food, and he forgot his job of why he was there. The other animals waited a while. Dog hadn't returned to tell them anything, so they all climbed up to the sky world. Beaver went first, again, he was the one who shot the arrows. And he went and he said, "I will go in the house of these people and I will get fire. They will see me, and they will wonder who I am because they had never seen an animal like me before. And they will wonder who I am, and they will kill me, cut me open, and they will cut off my skin, my fur. Before they cook me, you must frighten them. You must chase them away and then I will return with fire underneath my long nails. And so, that was the plan. And everyone agreed to play their part. So, Beaver went to the pond by the house of the sky people. And they saw him, they trapped him, and they hit him over the head, and they killed him. They took him in to their house because they had never seen an animal like this before. He was very interesting to them, very beautiful. And so, they cut him open, they took off his skin, and they were just about to cook him when all the other animals would come to the sky world, attack the house, yelling and screaming. And the sky people were frightened, and they ran away. Beaver put back his coat, his fur coat. Now he was whole again, he was alive again. And he went to the fire and he put the fire under his claws. Then all the animals started going back down that ladder. They were going back down the arrow ladder heading back down to the earth below when the ladder broke and many of the animals fell out of the sky world. Some of them turned in to birds and bats that were able to fly away. But other animals fell to the earth below and their bodies, as they hit the earth, were changed into the animals they are today. So, at one point the animals looked a totally different way than they are now, because their journey to the sky world to get fire and their return to the earth is transformed into the beings they are today. So, when Beaver got back, he put fire and stone. He put fire in the wood so that is why you can make fire, you can make sparks to make fire out of stone and it will burn the wood, it comes out of the wood. So, this is how the Native people explain how fire came to the world. And that is all.