

Stories submitted by pupils  
of  
SEQUOYAH INDIAN TRAINING SCHOOL  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma  
in  
INDIAN-PIONEER HISTORY  
Prize Contest  
July 1, 1937

### Why The Opossum's Tail Is Hairless

Anna Faye Glory (Cherokee)

This is an Indian legend which the Cherokees often told to their children.

Once upon a time in a beautiful forest there ran a crystal stream.

On one side of the stream lived the Katyids, and on the other side lived the opossums. The two clans were rivals.

The opossums like to show off their long, silky fine hair, so every morning when the Katyids came to wash their faces, the opossums came, too, just to comb their hair in front of the Katyids.

The Katyids stood this for years until finally one night when all the forest folks were asleep they crossed the stream on stepping stones. After crossing, they slipped into the opossum's camp, clipped off the hair from the opossum's tails, pasted it back loosely, and went back across and to bed.

The next morning, down to the stream they went to wash their faces, and down came the opossums, too, singing as merrily as birds.

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Upon reaching the stream, the opossums immediately began to comb their hair. Imagine their surprise when all the hair fell from their tails! The Katydid's laughed to the tops of their voices, a thing unheard of before.

The opossums stood one second in sheer amazement, then realizing their state they vanished into the forest.

Later, when the white man found them, they had no hair on their tails.

INDIAN MEDICINES OF CHEROKEES  
BY  
SUSI ANNA HUMMINGBIRD (CHEROKEE).

The Cherokee Indians use many kinds of tree barks, and wild plants to cure various kinds of diseases. I, myself, have used some of these tree barks for different kinds of things. Of course my cousin or my Dad fixed the medicine.

For colds, I have used the hickory tree bark, the trumpet-vine root, and pine tree cones.

For cuts, I have used pine tree needles. The pine needle has to come off of the tree. For slight headaches, you can use the root of the trumpet vine.

You put the root into boiling water. When it is cooked, you let the liquid cool. You take this trumpet-vine root medicine every three hours.

For a bad cold, you can also use the charcoals. The way to fix the medicine is this; you get a cup full of water, and put charcoal into the water, and then you take the charcoal out and drink the water, but this is one medicine I never have used.

For burns, you use water. The doctor usually gets a cup of water and sprinkles it over your burn.

At the same time, these are the words he uses or says;

"Oh, Great Spirit, sprinkle your healing water, ice,

hail and snow over this burn." I have not used this.

For preventing whooping cough; get a land tortoise and split the very center of his back. When the blood comes, get a teaspoon full of it and drink it.

Cherokee Indian Superstitions I Remember

By

Susianna Hummingbird (Cherokee)

OWLS

If an owl appears at night, and hoots around your home that is a sign that some of your relatives will get sick, or will soon pass away.

We believe the owl is a human and has the power to turn himself to any form of animal that he wishes.

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Before a person can have the power to turn himself into an animal, he has to fast two weeks. If he eats within these two weeks, he will lose the power, and he will also be be-witched by an older person, and he will not live very long after that.

HOW TO MAKE IT STOP RAINING

If it is raining too much, and you want the rain to stop, get an old axe and put the blade into the ground, and the rain will cease to come in a few hours.

THE WARNING OF THE REDBIRD

If while you are walking along, a redbird comes and chirps along your way, it is giving you a warning. The warning will be good or bad, according to

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which side the bird is on, the left or right of you. If on the right, it is the sign that you will see someone you would like to see, and will have long talk with you. If the bird is on the left, it will surely be the sign that you will hear bad news, or see some one you don't want to see. If you see them, you'll probably have a quarrel with them.

THE WARNING OF THE YELLOW BIRD.

One day while a little girl was out feeding her chickens, a little yellow bird came among them, and started eating the corn, and it clucked just like a hen would.

The little girl just decided to chase this bird away because it was eating the corn away from the chickens. To her surprise, the more she chased it away, the more it ate. So finally it ate all the corn up, and then it bothered the girl. First it would peck at her hair and then at her nose.

So she went into the house and told her uncle about it. Her uncle asked her what kind of a bird it was, so she described it. Then her uncle told her it was the warning bird.

In a few days her aunt died.

## HOW THE DEER GOT HIS ANTLERS (Cherokee Legend)

Retold by Mary Sam (Cherokee)

This legend I am about to tell was told me by a Cherokee friend. The name of it is "How the deer got his antlers." This story tells how the Cherokees believed that the deer got his antlers.

Long, long time ago this world was once an animal kingdom. In those days, the coyote and the deer were noted for their swiftness.

Every summer or late in spring, the animals would all meet together and compete with one another in games and races. The winner of these different events that took place on that day was usually given a prize by the judge who was the bear.

These animals would meet every summer and plan the different things that would take place the next meeting. So this time the judge, the bear, said that he would give away a pair of pearl antlers to the winner of about a five mile race or more.

The animals chattered among themselves, and decided that they would like to know which were the faster, the coyotes or the deer, so the judge said they would race.

So these two animals went in training that winter so as to be ready for the event the next summer.

It seemed as if that year flew by for the animals.



## HOW THE DEER GOT HIS ANTLERS (Continued) Page 2

Then summer came, and the animals met again.

Mr. Bear took his seat on a throne under a big shady tree.

He called out the different events which were to take place. The games and races took place once again in the ever green forest, and each did his best in trying to win the prize.

Then finally the race between the coyote and the deer was called out, and each took his place by the throne where the starting line was marked. The judge gave the signal, and the races started off.

On and on they went, side by side, till finally the reindeer, who had not been taking long leaps, took his long, long leaps, and came to the finishing line about a foot ahead of the coyote.

The judge came down from his throne with the shining pearl antlers, and placed them on the head of the deer.

So now you have heard how the Indians believe the deer got his antlers.

## CREEK SUPERSTITIONS AND CUSTOMS I REMEMBER

By Lorine Chisolm

My mother was a fullblood Creek, and my father is five-eighths Creek and three-eighths Cherokee, so in our home I have heard many superstitions common in our tribe. I'll try to write what I can remember of them.

My father lived among the Cherokees while quite small, but while yet a small boy, he began living among the Creeks, so I remember only Creek stories.

When the Creeks have their stomp dances, they take medicine, and if they walk before the fire before the dance starts, it makes them sick. The medicine they take is made out of roots and herbs. When the medicine is taken, they are not supposed to eat all day and all night. If they do, it makes them sick and then they can't dance. During the Green Corn Dance, the dancers must not eat any corn or any kind of food made from it.

FUNERALS

My mother and I went to a funeral, and after it was over, we were walking around, and she told me never to step on a grave, especially a small grave, for if I did my feet would ache for a week. He told me also to always throw a rock on the grave, which was a way of shaking hands with the person who was buried there.

CREEK SUPERSTITIONS AND CUSTOMS I REMEMBER  
p. 2 BY Lorine Chisolm

One day while my mother was sick, a mocking bird flew into the house, and my grandmother told her not to sew any more until she got well, and was up, for if she did, she would never recover from her illness, and she would have hemorrhage.

Last year I was called home because of the death of my uncle, and before dinner I had to wash my face and hands in medicine made from roots and herbs. I did this in order to keep the spirit of my uncle from bothering me.

The Creeks say that when a person dies, he has four death days, and in these four days, he goes everywhere he has ever travelled in the days he has spent on earth. If you fall during these four days, that is the sign that the dead person has tripped you.

When I was rather a small child and cried lots, my father used to tell me it wasn't good for little girls to cry. When I grew larger, I asked him one day why it wasn't good for little girls to cry. He told me that it grieved the parents so much to hear their children cry that the crying would carry their parents to the grave before they were ready to go.

Cherokee Stories told by Nannie Batt, as told by her father.

### The Moon and Her Children

The white man wished to know about the moon. One of the wise men said he would teach him. On another day, he told what the Indians said long ago about the moon and her children.

There were lots of animals in the lower world, and these animals were very pleased with the sun. But they soon found he was careless, then sometimes he would be sullen and cross.

Sometimes he would stay at home along under the earth, so this left the world in darkness a long time.

So the little turtle made the bright moon to light the world when the sun was gone. The moon was the wife of the sun. They had many children, and these were the stars.

One time the sun was very angry with his wife. That night when he went under, the moon had to go with him. He had planned to kill her.

But the little turtle knew something about their trouble, and went right behind them. When she found them, the moon was much hurt. The heat had gone away from her. That is why the moon is now cold. Most of her light was gone.

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The sun made her shrink in fear until she was very small and all that was left of her was the thin little new moon which you see at evening low in the sky.

But finally the moon grew full and round and beautiful again. Then she was happy for she thought her husband would be pleased with her once more, but it didn't come the way she thought, for he remained angry. So this made her very sad so that she became smaller and smaller until she was again the thin little new moon.

Every time she grew round and full she hoped her husband would love her, but again and again the angry sun would make his wife shrink until all that was left of her was the little thin new moon. The sun would never say a kind word to her, so finally the new moon stayed thin as it is today.

The Rabbit and The Bear  
Cherokee

by Albert Sanders (Cherokee)

One day the Rabbit was alone and didn't have anything to do. He knew where Mr. Bear lived, so he decided to visit him.

When he got there, Mr. Bear was cooking dinner. The cottontail watched him doing his cooking. He had a pot of beans on the fire, but he didn't have any grease to put into the beans. So the rabbit asked him, "What do you do for grease?"

Mr. Bear said nothing, but he got his big old butcher knife out, and began to sharpen it. When he had finished, he said, "This is how I get my grease." He leaned over the pot, had his own neck right over the pot, and cut his own skin.

"Man", the rabbit said, "You have a good way of getting grease." Soon they ate their dinner, and the rabbit left, telling the bear to come and visit him some time. The bear promised he would be over to return the call soon.

The very next day, Mr. Bear went to visit the rabbit. The rabbit was having a big time. He had learned the way to cook beans, and how to get some grease. The rabbit

got his knife out. He leaned over the pot. His knife was real sharp, and he whacked his kneck, but he got blood instead of grease.

The old bear laughed, and said, "We, the fat ones, are the only ones that can get grease that way."

#### Different Belief Of The Cherokee

by Albert Sanders

In fishing, some take a blackberry stem (young), and rub it all over the fishing line. The stem has to be real young, about the first young berry stem to grow. After you get the stain on the line real good, they say you don't have to worry about catching fish. But if you eat a big dinner before going fishing, you won't have any luck, it is said.

Medicine work is the hardest thing to discover from Indians Because they will fix the medicine, but will not tell you how they fix it, but here is some information I found out for a whooping cough.

For whooping cough, get scaly bark from a hickory nut tree, and boil it. Let it cool, but not get too cold, then drink it. But it is not exactly only a belief. It will cure a cough.

They say it is seven years bad luck to kill a cat or dog.

Some Indians say that if a person points to a rainbow, there will be a bear come out of his finger.

They say it is very bad luck to walk under a ladder, or over a grave, or over a broom.

If you start somewhere and forget something, and then start back for it, someone will holler, "Bad luck!". But if you have to go back, you should sit down on your chair, and talk to somebody, and then leave.

If you walk with one shoe off, you must count the number of steps you take, for you will have that many days bad luck.

Lightning will strike you if you stand at the door when it is lightning.

A Legend  
(Cherokee)

by Albert Sanders.

The Opossum And The Rabbit

The opossum had a beautiful tail, and the rabbit was jealous of the opossum's tail. The rabbit had one of his own, but he wasn't satisfied with it, so the jealousy kept growing stronger in the rabbit, and he planned a way to get the beauty off of the opossum's tail.



So the rabbit gathered lots of crickets to shear the hair off the opossum's tail, and the crickets did their work. The opossum learned later that the rabbit had put the crickets at this work, so he was very angry with the rabbit. One day the opossum met the rabbit and he said, "Oh, there you are!"

The rabbit started running, and the opossum right behind him. They went for a long chase. Finally the rabbit saw a hole in a log, and made a big dive for it, but he missed it. The second trial, he got his body into it, but his tail was sticking out. So the opossum snatched his tail off because of the trick he had played him. So that's why their tails are like they are.

## HOW WE GOT THE STAR DIPPER

(CREEK)

By Josephine McIntosh (Creek)

I suppose we have often wondered about the star dipper and why we have one. I am going to tell you how I have always been told why.

Once there lived a little girl with her poor old grandmother. The grandmother was not very strong and was growing very old. One night she became very ill, and needed a drink of cold water.

There wasn't a drop of water in the house, and it was miles to the spring, but the little girl knew her grandmother needed a cold drink, so she went to get her some.

The night was dark and cold, and she tore her feet on the sharp rocks, but she kept on going. She finally reached the spring, and filled her dipper with the cool spring water.

She started back with the water. On the way home, she met a poor little dog who needed a drink of water, so she gave the little dog a drink. She went on a little farther and met a cat. She gave the cat a drink. When she was almost home she met a poor old man who asked her if he might have a drink of the water. She noticed that the water in the dipper was almost gone, but she gave him a drink anyway.

She looked at the dipper and thought of her poor old grandmother who needed the water so badly. All at once the dipper began to move up, up, up into the sky. She didn't know

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(CREEK)

Josephine McIntosh

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what to think for it happened so quickly.

The dipper stopped in the faraway sky, and today we have the star dipper because the little girl was so kind to the dog, the cat, and the poor old man.

## THE CHIEF'S PROMISE

(Natchez, a branch of the Creek)

By Burgess Carlyle

The reason I have taken this for my legend is because it is one about the Natchez Indians. It is known by the Creeks that there is only one Natchez Indian living among them who talks the language today, and I have talked with him.

A warrior from the Natchez country loved a maiden from the Biloxi, a branch of the Creek tribe. Her father was the chief. When the warrior asked him for his daughter, the chief pointed to a tree from which one very large bow grew out, and said,

"When the branches of that tree twist themselves into a ring, and that ring hangs on the great bow, and you can see the blue sky through it, then I shall allow my daughter to leave her home and her people and go away with a stranger."

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Soon after this a whirlwind swept the whole coast.

It broke many twigs from the great tree, but they did not fall to the ground or blow away. They circles round and around in the air, and finally twisted themselves into a ring.

THE CHIEF'S PROMISE (Con't)

(Natchez, a branch of the Creek)

By Burgess Carlyle

When the storm had passed, a ring hung on the great tree. People looked through it and saw the blue sky. So then the Biloxi chieftain had to do according to his promise, and let the Natchez warrior marry his beautiful daughter, and take her to live among his own people.

## HOW THE ROBIN GOT ITS RED BREAST

(CREEK)

by Josephine McIntosh

I will not say this is a true story, but since I was a small child, I have heard this story told among the Creek Indians.

There was once an old Indian man who lived all alone in a deep forest. He had all the comfort life could want.

One night he was sitting in front of the fireplace smoking and singing an old song. It was very cold and raining outside. He heard a knock on the door. When he went to the door, there was a poor, wet, cold, little, brown bird lying on the doorstep.

He took the poor little bird, fed him, and placed him in front of the fireplace to dry his feathers.

After a while the bird began to move about. Not knowing he had been so close to the fire, he noticed when he started to leave that all of his breast feathers had burned till they turned to a brownish red, and today the robins still have their red breasts.