



Unit 8

Reader

Grade 3

Native American Stories

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Reader

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Introduction to *Native American Stories*

Character Pronunciation Key

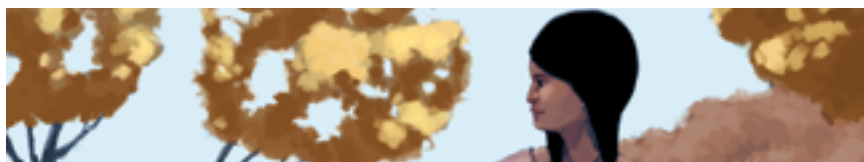


Chapter 1 Etu, the Hunter

Etu	/e/	/t/ /oo/
-----	-----	----------

Hakan	/h/ /a/	/k/ /a/ /n/
-------	---------	-------------

Delsin	/d/ /e/ /l/	/s/ /i/ /n/
--------	-------------	-------------



Chapter 2 Akando and Aponi, the Gatherers

Akando	/a/	/k/ /a/ /n/	/d/ /oe/
--------	-----	-------------	----------

Aponi	/a/	/p/ /o/ /n/	/ee/
-------	-----	-------------	------



Chapter 3 Alemeda, the Basket Weaver

Alemeda	/ae/	/l/ /e/	/m/ /ee/	/d/ /ə/
---------	------	---------	----------	---------

Kele	/k/ /ee/	/l/ /ee/
------	----------	----------



Chapter 4 Alo, the Spirit Giver

Alo	/ae/	/l/ /oe/
-----	------	----------



Chapter 5 Meda and Flo, the Forest Children

Meda	/m/ /ee/	/d/ /ə/
------	----------	---------



Chapter 6 Adoette and Awan, the Bird Chasers

Adoette	/a/ /d/	/oe/	/e/ /t/
---------	---------	------	---------

Awan	/o/	/w/ /o/ /n/
------	-----	-------------



Chapter 7 Yutu, the Dog Trainer

Yutu	/ue/	/t/ /oo/
------	------	----------

Miki	/m/ /ee/	/k/ /ee/
------	----------	----------



Chapter 8 The Hunting of the Great Bear: An Iroquois Tale

Nyah-gwahch	/n/ /ie/	/o/	/g/ /w/ /o/	/e/
-------------	----------	-----	-------------	-----

Introduction to *Native American Stories* (continued)





Chapter

1 Etu, the Hunter

We walked silently and carefully across the **glistening** snow. The sun shone on the snow and made it sparkle and shine like the stars in the night sky. Before we left our camp, my brothers had told me many times that I must do exactly as they said. If I did not, they would send me away.

They said that as we walked, I must step silently and carefully into my older brother's footprints. My oldest brother, Hakan, was six years older than me. He was the lead tracker. His footprints led the way. My brother Delsin was three years older than me. He followed closely behind Hakan, stepping easily into his footprints. I was right behind Delsin, trying hard not to wobble from side to side as I stepped into his enormous footprints.



Etu steps into his brother's footprints.

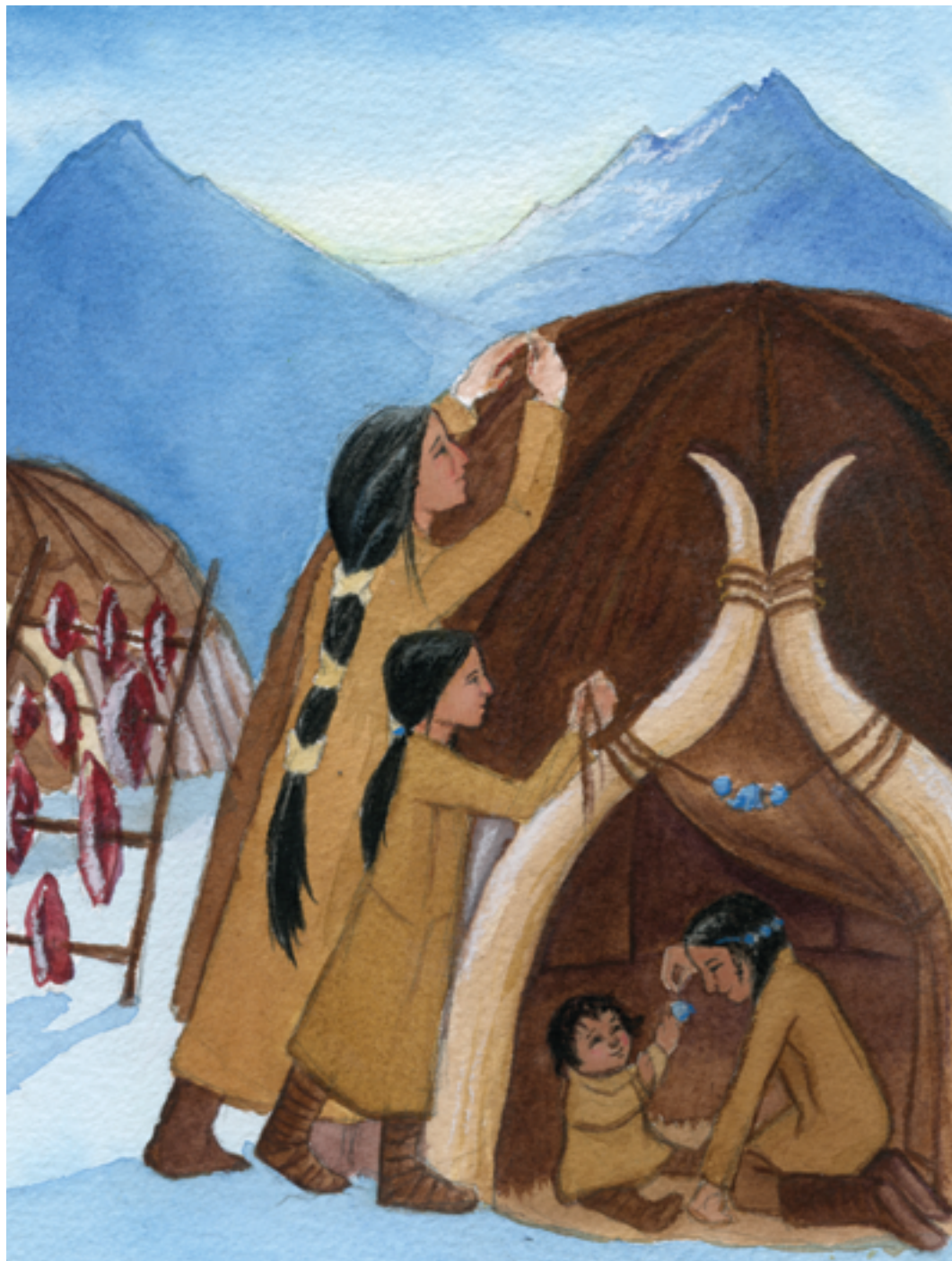
My father and uncles moved in a straight line some distance behind us. These were the men in our family who hunted and killed the great creatures that roamed across the land we lived on. Each man held a flint-tipped spear and an atlatl, or spear thrower. My brothers and I had our slingshots slung over our shoulders. This was my first hunt. We were following a herd of woolly mammoths. We were waiting for one member of the herd to fall behind. As soon as it did, the men would move forward and drive it into a ditch. We had to be careful though. It was important that the creature did not sense our presence. If it did, it would certainly charge at us using its great size and curved tusks as powerful weapons. If this happened, the herd itself would panic and would **stampede** for sure.

I loved to listen to the sound of the crunching snow beneath our feet. I loved the feel of the icy wind against my cheeks. All around, the tips of tall, green grass sprang up from the snow-covered land. The woolly mammoths dined on the lush grass. They used their tusks to push the snow aside so that they could reach every juicy part of it.



A herd of woolly mammoths grazing

We walked until the sun began to sink in the sky and a golden **haze** touched the shimmering earth. I spotted various clumps of tall grass that brought faint color to the mostly white, crisp **terrain**. As we walked, I thought about my mother and sister, who were also at work. They were repairing the **shelter** we had built from mammoth skin, bones, branches, and earth. Several days earlier, strong winds had damaged the camp we had set up near the herd. They knew, as did we, that mammoth flesh could feed many people for quite some time. It could be dried and saved so that it lasted until the next successful hunt. A mammoth's skin and fur could be made into warm clothing or it could be used to make a cozy **shelter**.



*Etu's mother and sister repair their **shelter**.*

Suddenly, my brother Hakan stopped moving and raised an arm. Then, he signaled for us to crouch down. We immediately did as he commanded. I peeked around to see the men behind us doing the same thing. My brother put a finger to his lips and looked at us directly, signaling us to be quiet. I could tell that he had spotted a lone woolly mammoth.

As we crouched down in the snow, the hunters began to move forward. I held my breath as my father and uncles moved past us. I knew that they would not use their spears until the giant creature had been cornered in the ditch with no way out. My heart pounded in my chest as I watched the men suddenly surround what seemed to be a young mammoth. They drove it with such skill into the snow-covered ditch, whooping and hollering as they went. Then, without hesitating, my father and uncles launched their spears. I watched this great and powerful creature fall, crashing to the ground.



The hunters corner the mammoth.

Chapter 2 Akando and Aponi, the Gatherers

I stared up at the blue sky and squinted. It was hot. There was not a cloud in the sky. Even though the leaves on the trees were now changing to splendid colors that made me stop and stare, the intense heat of the sun still lingered. I stood for a moment and rested my tired feet. I could tell that the heat of the day would soon be replaced by an explosive thunderstorm.

I glanced back toward our village, but it was now almost completely out of sight. I couldn't see the roofs of the houses and storage rooms, nor the smoke rising up from each family hearth. I could, however, still see our chief's home. I could also still glimpse the **ceremonial** buildings that sat upon the large mounds that my people **constructed**.



Aponi looks back toward her village.

My brother Akando and I had been sent out with our baskets to gather wild fruits, berries, and nuts. In fact, this was the time of the year when most of the children in our village were put to work. This was the time of year when the children gathered nuts, fruits, and berries that could be preserved or dried. We also gathered wild onions and milkweed. This food would be needed when the earth was frozen. It was important that we gathered what nature provided for us before the rains came and washed it all away or the frost came and killed it.



Food that children gathered

The crops that we grew, sunflowers, corn, squash, and tobacco, were also being harvested. Some of the older children were busily helping in the fields. Only the **Shamans** were allowed to gather tobacco and the roots and bark that were used for medicine. My brother told me that the **Shamans** offered tobacco to the four directions of the earth before the roots of the medicine plant were taken.

I looked ahead, in search of Akando. My brother was so far ahead of me that I was losing sight of him.

“Akando, slow down,” I called to my brother. “Can we rest for a while?”

Akando looked back at me. He is my twin brother and even though we are the same size, he is stronger than I am. Akando had a large **birch** bark basket strapped around his waist. It was almost full to the brim with hickory nuts and hazelnuts. I had a basket strapped to my waist too. Mine was smaller than his and it was only half full with butternuts and acorns.

“Just for a short while, Aponi,” he yelled back. “We haven’t even begun to collect the berries.”



Aponi calls to Akando to wait.

Akando walked back and sat down beside me on the ground. “Want to play a game?” he asked.

“Yes. What game?” I replied eagerly.

“We’ll play a guessing game,” Akando replied. “Now, turn away until I say you can look.”

Akando was very bossy but I loved him. He always stuck up for me when some of the children in the village teased me.

“Okay, ready!” said Akando.

I turned around to see that three large, **autumnal** oak leaves had been placed on the ground. Akando had placed a stone under one of them and I had to guess which one. I only had one guess. We would do this three times, then we would switch and Akando would have to guess. He always beat me.

“The one in the middle,” I said hopefully.

“Wrong!” exclaimed Akando. “It’s the one on the left,” he said as he lifted up the leaf to reveal the stone.

My next guess was also wrong, but my third and final guess was correct.



Akando and Aponi play a guessing game.

“Now, it’s your turn,” I said.

As always, Akando beat me. He got two out of three guesses right.

“Okay, let’s go,” he said, urging me on. “The sooner we gather all that we can, the sooner we can return home.”

“I guess,” I said but I continued to sit on the ground.

“Later on, if you like, I will show you how to beat me in the guessing game,” Akando offered, trying to spur me on.

It worked.

“Really?” I asked, jumping to my feet and picking up my basket.

“Really!” Akando replied. “But first you have to fill that basket!”

“Okay,” I said, smiling at him.

Then, I grabbed my brother’s hand and walked with him beneath the canopy of red-, gold-, and copper-colored leaves.



Akando and Aponi walk hand in hand to collect more food.

Chapter

3 Alemeda, the Basket Weaver

“Alemeda! Where are you?” my mother called.

I did not answer. Instead, I crept around the corner of our home and hid. I waited and watched in the cooling shade. I held my breath. I was just about to close my eyes when a lizard raced across my bare feet. It tickled.

“She’s hiding from you,” my younger brother Kele announced. “She’s over there,” he said, pointing towards me.

I did not reply but stuck my tongue out at Kele. He was always getting me into trouble.

“Alemeda, we need you. We have work to do. We must finish the baskets,” my mother said, as I made my way towards her. She was not angry but it was clear that she was not going to let me play. I had work to do.



Alemeda hides from her mother.

I walked slowly towards the shaded area that my father had **constructed** out of wooden poles and a covering. I kicked at the dirt as I walked. There were several of these structures scattered around our village. Women could be found sitting under them weaving baskets of various shapes and sizes. They also created a whole host of other things. Men could be found sitting together shaping tools for hunting and farming.

All of the women in our village made baskets. Baskets were very important because they were used for carrying water, for storing grain, fruits, nuts, and berries, and even for cooking.

“Sit near me,” my grandmother said as I came and stood beside her.

I sighed deeply and threw myself down on the ground next to her.

She smiled and handed me the basket I had begun to make the day before.

“Our people have been making these baskets since time began,” she said. “This skill has been handed down from one **generation** to the next. It is important that you learn it, Alemeda.”



Alemeda walks through her village.

“I know,” I replied, and then I sighed again. “But I would rather learn how to hunt than weave baskets,” I admitted.

My grandmother laughed out loud. “When I was your age, I thought the same thing,” she replied.

“Really?” I asked, looking at her wise, old face. “Then, why are you making me do it?” I asked eagerly, wondering if there was a way out.

Grandmother looked at me for a few moments before she replied. Then she asked, “When you hunt, or fish, or even farm, what are you going to do with the food you have provided?”

“Eat it!” I exclaimed cheerfully.

“But we can’t eat everything at once,” she chuckled. “We must save the corn we harvest. We must dry some of the meat we hunt for, we must **store** the fruits and berries we gather. We must **store** this food safely so that we can survive during the time when the sun has turned away from us. You will come to see, Alemeda, how important it is to learn this skill. Now, remember what I told you yesterday. All coiled baskets are made from plants that bend easily. Plants such as yucca, split willow, rabbitbrush, or skunkbrush are the best.”



Alemeda talks to her grandmother as they weave baskets.

“I remember,” I said, still not convinced that I wouldn’t be happier hunting. “Is that why we can also make rope, sandals, mats, and even clothes out of these plants that bend easily?” I asked, trying not to sound too interested.

“Yes, these plants have many uses. But it is our skill as weavers that enables us to make these things. Plus, Alemeda, you want to get married don’t you?” she asked as she revealed a large toothy grin.

“No,” I replied immediately.

My grandmother exploded with loud laughter.

“Well, in case you ever change your mind, your skill as a weaver might get you noticed by any one of those boys that you like to go hunting with,” she continued, her eyes shining with delight.

“Yuck,” I said by way of a reply, and then I spat in the dirt to make my point even more clearly.

“Well, just in case you change your mind, we had better get to work,” Grandmother said with a chuckle. Then, together we began to weave the baskets that my people had been making since time began.



Grandmother and Alemeda work and laugh together.

Chapter

4

Alo, the Spirit Giver

Hello! My name is Alo. I am a ten-year-old Hopi [hoe-pee] boy. Welcome to my village.

It snowed last night, just enough to cover my feet. The snow did not stay on the ground for long though. The warmth of the morning sun melted it all. My younger brothers and sisters had hoped to play in it. They were disappointed to see the shimmering blanket of snow disappear so quickly into the thirsty earth.

Today is an important day for my people. Today is the Bean Dance Ceremony. The **spirits**, or as my people call them, **kachinas** [kots-ee-nos], have arrived on Earth. They left their home on the tall mountains on the darkest day of the year and came to us. That was several weeks ago. From that day until the day when the sun shines longest in the sky, they will stay with us. They are our guardians. Long ago, they lived here on Earth and taught us how to hunt, gather, and farm. Then, they left us but agreed to return for half of the year.



*Alo looks out over the snow-dusted desert while **kachina** spirits swirl in the sky.*

In case you do not know, the word **kachina** means ‘father of life’. For us, living as we do in the hot, arid desert lands of our forefathers, we could not survive here without the help of the **spirits**—the **kachinas**. **Kachinas** care for every living thing on Earth, and all living things go to the **spirit** world when they die. So you see, **kachinas** are actually the **spirits** of everything that has ever lived. They govern the moon, the stars, the thunderous heavens, and the crops, as well as our health. Many of the **kachinas** are our **ancestors** who have become the cloud **spirits** that bring us rain.

On certain days of the year, the **kachinas** take us on a journey into the **spirit** world. Today is such a day and I will at last make that journey. I will take part in the Bean Dance **Ceremony**. This is one of our most important **ceremonies**. Today, the people of my village will ask the **spirits** to help us as we once again prepare the earth for planting. We will ask especially for the gift of rain. I have offered many, many prayer feathers and gifts of corn seed to the **spirits** in preparation for this **ceremony**. My mother now calls me the ‘**spirit** giver’.



***Kachinas** travel down the mountain, giving life to the desert.*

On days such as today, boys from the age of ten to the elders in our village wear special **kachina** clothing and face masks. Only boys and men can do this. The special clothing and masks represent **spirits**. These items reveal what **spirit** we are going to become. For you see, when we take part in these **ceremonies**, and wear the special clothing and masks, we actually become those **spirits**.

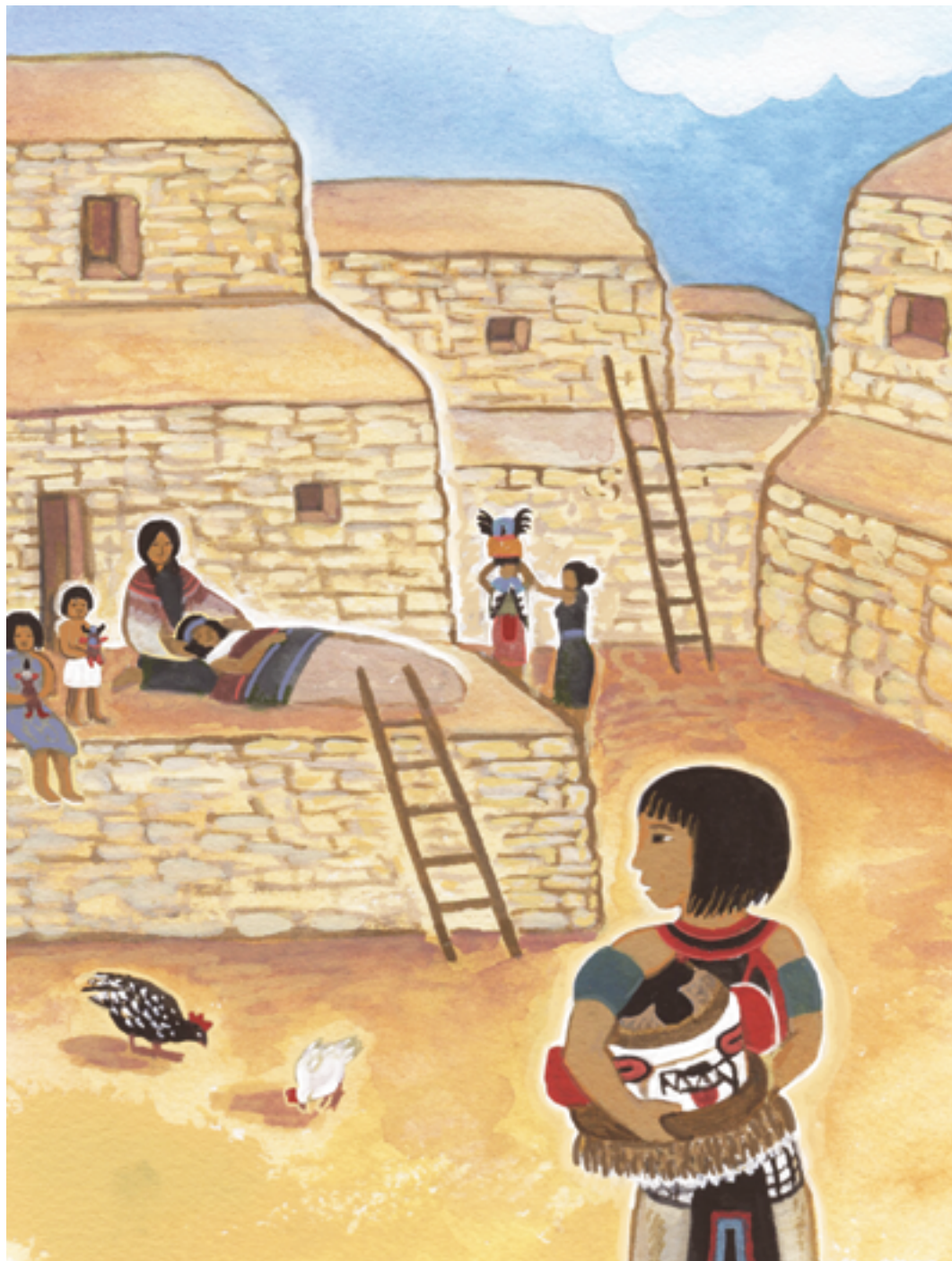
Perhaps you could come to the **ceremony**. If you can come, pay close attention to the Aholi **Kachina spirit**. That is the Hopi rain **spirit**. The boys and men who will become that **spirit** will wear multi-colored **cloaks** and may even carry wands. They will wear bright blue masks or headdresses. They will hold rattles made from gourds. When they shake the rattles, it sounds like rain falling. Often, within hours of the **ceremony**, rain will actually begin to fall.



Alo dresses for the ceremony.

I will not be asking for rain though. My father is very ill and so today, I will become the Bear **Kachina**. The Bear **Kachina** can cure the sick and when I become that **spirit**, I will make my father well again. If you come to the **ceremony**, you will know me by the mask that has the bear paw prints on either cheek.

It is my first time in such an important **ceremony** and I must do my best. I must cure my father. This year he was not well enough to make the **kachina** dolls for my sisters. My uncle had to do that for them. We need him to be well again soon. My brothers and sisters want to play with him. I want to help him prepare the fields and plant and harvest the beans and corn we grow each year. Oh, but I must go now. It is time. If you can come, please look for me, but do not call out my **spirit** name. That will bring bad luck.



Alo looks back at his home and family.

Chapter

5

Meda and Flo, the Forest Children

“Flo, I’ll race you to that tree over there,” said Meda, pointing to one of the maple trees.

“Okay,” I said confidently. I was one of the fastest runners among the girls of my age in our village. I wondered why Meda was even challenging me to a race.

Immediately, Meda flew like an arrow straight toward her target. She was clearly hoping that a quick start would give her an advantage over me. However, like a shooting star that bursts across the night sky, I was on her heels in no time. Just before we reached the tree, I passed her and touched the tree trunk.

“I won,” I exclaimed. “You’re pretty fast though, Meda,” I admitted. “Considering you are a year younger than me, that was quite a race!”

“Yes! This time next year, when we return to the maple tree forest, I’ll be able to beat you,” Meda said confidently, while at the same time grinning at me.



Flo and Meda race to a large maple tree.

I grinned back. "I'll still be a year older than you," I said, rising to the challenge.

"I know. You'll always be that. But I have a feeling that this time next year, I will be taller than you," she replied as if she were stating a fact.

"Well, we'll see about that," I replied as I eyed her feet. They were already bigger than mine and she was only a thumb size shorter than me. I couldn't help thinking that she might be right, but I wasn't going to admit it.

This was my favorite time of year by far. It was the time of year when the eagles built their spring nests. The chickadees made their strange, eerie call in the early morning. The snow was melting all around and tree buds were emerging daily.

This was also the time of year when my family, along with my uncles and aunts and their children, set up camp in the maple tree forest. We did this every year at the beginning of spring. We left our summer and winter village and returned to our camp in the forest. In the fall we camped near the fields we planted our crops in.



Signs of spring in the forest

We always returned to the same maple forest camp. It was a good-sized clearing encircled by a large number of maple trees and **birch** trees. We returned here each year to collect the **sap** from the maple trees and turn it into the sweet syrup that we all loved so much.

This year we were lucky. The winter winds and frequent snowfall had not destroyed our wigwam frames from the previous year. We only had to wrap the deerskin that we had carried with us around the frames. After we made our campfire, the children had a chance to play before the real work began.

Once we were settled, the men would use their axes to make small, deep cuts in the trunks of the maple trees. Then, we would wait for the **sap** to **trickle** out. As it did, the women and children would funnel the **sap** into **birch** baskets or clay pots. We used curved pieces of cedar wood or hollowed-out sumac stems as funnels.



Everyone in the camp works to tap and cook maple syrup.

Sap from the maple tree looks like water when it first **trickles** out from inside the tree. Once the **sap** is collected, my mother and aunts cook it in a clay pot. Sometimes, they put the pot right on the open campfire. Other times, they put red-hot rocks right into the clay pots. After you've cooked it for a while, the **sap** turns into sweet syrup. If you keep on cooking it, the **sap** turns into sugar.

During this time, the older girls also collect **birch** bark. They strip the bark from the trees and pound it until it can be shaped and molded into storage containers or dishes. The men and boys busy themselves hunting and fishing. In the evening, we all spend time together around the campfire exchanging stories.

"Come on, Flo," yelled Meda, who had wandered off to watch the men at work. "I can smell dinner cooking."

She was right. The succulent smell of deer meat wafted up into the crisp evening air.

"Race you back," I announced. This time I took off like an arrow shot from my father's bow.



Meda and Flo race back to the camp.

Chapter 6 Adoette and Awan, the Bird Chasers

“Adoette, it’s time to go,” whispered Awan. “The sun is almost up!”

“I’m coming,” Adoette replied softly as she tiptoed through the doorway of her home. “I have fish for us to eat later,” she continued.

“I have water for us to drink,” Awan said as he smiled at Adoette.

The children chatted with each other as they made their way towards their family’s cornfield. The cornfield was a short distance from their village near the river. As they walked, the sound of crows cawing rose up into the warm, spring air. The crows had returned to signal that wintertime was over. The warmth of the sun was once again encouraging life in the sleeping Earth.



Adoette and Awan head toward the cornfield.

The sun was a yellow **haze** on the **horizon** as the two children walked together. Adoette and Awan had the important job of scaring the crows away from the corn seeds that had been planted in the field. The crows had returned just in time to watch the men of the village plant their crops. The dirt, no longer frozen, was now warm enough for planting. Using a hoe fashioned from the jaw bone of a deer and a small tree branch, the men created long, thin **channels** in the dirt. They placed the corn seeds one footprint apart in the bottom of each **channel**. They covered the seeds with dirt and watched as the rainfall and the sunshine did the rest. Each family group had its own cornfield. Corn was an important crop. It could be **stored** for the winter in grass-covered pits. Corn was used to make flour for fried cakes, breads, and puddings. The husks of the corn plant were used to make baskets and mats. In addition to corn, each family grew beans and squash. They also hunted and fished.

Once the corn was planted, the women and children checked to make sure the young seedlings got plenty of water. If the spring rains did not come and water the earth, then the women and children did. The children also had the job of protecting the young plants from all kinds of hungry critters.



People working to plant corn seeds

Adoette and Awan were sent to the family cornfield each day to guard the crop. As the corn crop had just been planted, crows were the worst enemy. They would either dig up the newly planted seeds with their sharp talons or they would wait for the seeds to **germinate**. Then, they would pull up each seedling plant, cawing with delight as they consumed the corn seed and discarded the rest.

As the two children arrived in the cornfield, they could see that several crows were already there. The crows sat in the dirt, watching the young plants. Adoette and Awan placed their supplies on the ground and yelled at the crows. The crows stared at the children with their coal-black eyes. Then, they flapped their wings and flew away. One crow, however, could not quite lift its body off the ground and instead tried to **scuttle** away from the children. It made its way towards some low-lying shrubs.

“Oh, it’s injured!” exclaimed Adoette. “We must help it.”

“Help it!” screeched Awan. “We’re supposed to chase it away.”



Awan scares crows away while Adoette notices a hurt crow.

“If it can’t fly, it could be eaten up by any number of creatures,” continued Adoette eagerly.

“You are crazy,” said Awan.

Slowly, Adoette made her way towards the crow. The crow had stopped moving just in front of a shrub. It had turned to look at Adoette.

“Are you injured?” Adoette asked the bird softly.
“Here, let me help you.”

The crow inched its body under the shrub and stared intently at Adoette.

Adoette sat down in the dirt and chatted with the crow for a while. Awan, unhappy with his cousin’s behavior, stomped off to look for snakes. Eventually, Adoette reached in under the shrub and gently yet confidently picked up the bird. The crow flapped its wings for a second or two, but then settled down in Adoette’s arms.

When Awan returned, he found Adoette watching the field with a crow in her arms.



Awan returns to find Adoette holding the crow.

“What are you going to do with it?” asked Awan who was quite astonished by the sight of his cousin cuddling a crow.

“I’m going to make it better,” Adoette exclaimed.

Awan simply shook his head.

For the rest of the day, the two children guarded the corn crop. When the sun began to set, they made their way back to the village. Adoette walked proudly beside Awan, carrying the enemy in her arms.



Awan continues to guard the corn crop.

7 Yutu, the Dog Trainer

“Come here, Miki,” I called. Miki had been the runt of the **litter**. He had been puny and sickly for the first weeks of his life. My father was sure that he would die. I fed him and kept him warm, sometimes sneaking him into my cozy bed at night. I gave him the Inuit [in-ue-it] name for small.

Miki wagged his tail and scampered toward me. Then, he plopped down right on my feet and rested his head on the snow.

When Miki’s brothers and sisters were old enough to be weaned from their mother, my father began to train them to be sled dogs. My people, the Inuit, are expert dog sled trainers. That’s because we live in a land that is frozen for a large part of the year. So, we rely a lot on our dogs to help us travel and hunt.



Yutu with Miki

Inuit sled dogs have to be strong and fast. When Miki was younger, he was neither of these things. Sled dogs have to pull heavy loads and travel across long distances as speedily as they can. We Inuit live by our **wits**. We hunt and fish across this frozen land. We travel across the snow and ice in our sleds **crafted** from bones or antlers, seal hide, and even frozen salmon skin. We build snow homes made from blocks of snow as we go.

Our dogs have to be able to sniff out seal breathing holes or stand firm with the other dogs when they come across a polar bear. I couldn't imagine Miki doing any of these things, but he would have to. My father had made it clear that he would have to earn his keep. I had grown up watching my father train the dogs. When the dogs are young, they are always eager to run, but they are less willing to work together. They have to be taught how to pull the sleds together, as a team. My father knows just how to talk to them. His voice is firm and they obey him. This is important. When the dogs are pulling the sleds, they must all obey the commands given by the driver of the sled.



Yutu and Miki watch as Yutu's father works with other dogs.

There are a number of ways to hitch the dogs so that they can pull the sleds. Quite often they are tied in pairs to a single towline. In deep snow, sometimes it is better to have the dogs pull the sled in a single line. This way, they can make a path through the snow. If the snow is packed down hard, a fan hitch is best. This means that the dogs are attached to the sled by their own individual towlines.

The dogs themselves are more able to live in this frozen land than people are. They have thick, waterproof fur coats. Their ears are extra furry to prevent frostbite. Their paws are large and have thick pads with fur. Miki frequently jumps on me with his enormous paws and knocks me over. Their large, bushy tails can curl around their faces at night and keep them warm.



Yutu's father works with dogs using a fan hitch.

Once Miki was strong enough, I began to train him. At first, I worked with him on basic obedience. Then, I harnessed him to a towline and had him pull small loads of wrapped furs across the snow. The very first time he had to pull something, he raced off like an **arctic** fox. He thought we were playing a game. He soon learned to pull like I needed him to, though. He was also super fast. I felt sad for Miki. If he hadn't been so sickly, I'm sure he could have been a **lead** dog.

My father had watched me as I trained Miki. I think even he was surprised by how well Miki progressed. Miki had been by my side ever since he was a small puppy. Today was the day that he would leave me. He was going with my father and uncles on a hunting trip. They would be gone for several weeks.

I bent down and patted Miki on the head. He immediately sat up and licked my face.

"Be good, Miki. Do what you are told. Follow the other dogs and listen to my father. Do you hear me?" I said to him. Miki looked right at me and wagged his tail. Then, my father came and led him away.



Yutu says goodbye to Miki before he sets out on his first hunting trip as a sled dog.

Chapter

8

The Hunting of the Great Bear: An Iroquois Tale

Long ago, there were four brothers who were all skillful hunters. One day, during the time of year when morning frost covers the earth, a messenger came to the village where they lived.

“We need your help,” said the messenger. “A great bear has come to live in the forest where we hunt. It also comes into our village at night.”

The four hunters did not say a word. Instead, they gathered up their spears and called to their dog. Then, with the messenger, they set off for the village.

On the way to the village, they noticed that the forest was very quiet. They also noticed deep scratches on the trunk of a pine tree. The scratches had been made by the great bear as it reared up on its **hind** legs. It had done this to mark its territory.

The tallest brother raised his spear to try to touch the highest scratch marks, but he could not.



The four brothers examine marks left by the great bear.

“Ah, it is as we feared,” he said. “The great bear is Nyah-gwaheh.”

“This bear has magic powers,” said the second brother fearfully.

“Don’t worry,” said the tallest brother. “The bear’s magic will not work on us if we find its tracks first.”

“Yes, that is true,” said the third brother. “If we find Nyah-gwaheh’s tracks and begin to follow them, then it must run from us.”

“This sounds like hard work,” said the fourth brother, who was both chubby and lazy. “Do we have any food?” he asked. His brothers ignored him.

As the brothers and the messenger entered the village, they were struck by an eerie silence. Only the village leader was there to greet them.

“We have come to help you,” said the first brother.

“Do you have any food?” asked the fourth brother.

“Pay no attention to him,” **urged** the oldest brother. “We will find this great bear.”

“I wish you luck,” said the village leader. “When we follow the great bear’s tracks, they disappear.”



The four brothers listen to the village leader.

“Do not worry,” said the second brother. “Four Eyes can track anything, anywhere.”

Four Eyes licked his master’s hand. Four Eyes had two black circles on his head, one above each eye.

“Let’s go,” said the first brother.

“What, no food?” exclaimed the fourth brother as he ran behind the others.

The four brothers followed Four Eyes. Four Eyes sniffed the ground. They could all sense that Nyah-gwaheh was close by. It was important that they found its tracks before it began to follow them.

The fourth brother, who by now felt very hungry, took out his **pemmican** pouch. He opened the pouch and reached in. Instead of food, he found nothing but worms. Nyah-gwaheh had transformed the food into worms.

Meanwhile, like a monstrous ghost, Nyah-gwaheh moved through the forest, planning to creep up behind them.



The search for Nyah-gwaheh

Suddenly, Four Eyes lifted his head and barked.

“We have found you,” yelled the first brother.

Nyah-gwahéh began to run. The brothers followed. The great bear ran and ran, across valleys and hills. As they ran, day turned to night. Higher and higher they climbed to the top of a mountain.

The fourth brother grew **weary**. He pretended to fall and injure his ankle.

“You must carry me,” he said. Two of the brothers lifted him up while the other one carried his spear.

The great bear began to tire. So did the brothers. Eventually, Four Eyes got close enough to the bear to nip its tail.

“You can put me down now,” said the fourth brother, who was nicely rested.



Chasing Nyah-gwah higher and higher

The brothers put him down. Immediately, he sprinted off in front of his brothers. Minutes later, the fourth brother was close enough to the bear to kill it with his spear. When the three brothers caught up with him, he had already built a fire and was cutting up the meat.

“Sit down. I hope you are as hungry as I am,” said the fourth brother, smiling. Together, the brothers cooked and ate the meat of the great bear.

“Brothers,” said the first brother, staring down at his feet. “We are not on a mountain, we are high up in the sky.”

He was right. The great, magical bear had led them up into the heavens.



The four brothers realize they are high up in the sky.

Suddenly, Four Eyes began to bark.

“Look,” said the second brother. The four brothers stared at what was left of Nyah-gwaheh’s body. The great bear was coming back to life. As they watched, it began to run away. Four Eyes took off after it.

“Let’s go,” said the first brother. The brothers reached for their spears and ran after the great bear. They chased it across the sky.

And so it remains. Each autumn, the brothers chase the bear across the sky. When they catch it, they kill it. As they cut up the meat, blood drips down to Earth and colors the leaves of the maple tree red. As they cook the bear, fat drips down and makes the grass pale and lifeless.



Every autumn, the brothers chase the bear across the sky.

Glossary for *Native American Stories*

A

ancestor—a person in your family who was alive long ago, even before your grandparents (**ancestors**)

arctic—relating to extreme cold and winter

arid—extremely dry due to a lack of rain

autumnal—relating to the season of fall

axe—a tool with a sharp blade on the end of a long handle that is used to chop wood (**axes**)

B

basic—relating to the most important part of something

birch—a tree with hard wood and smooth bark that peels off easily in strips

C

caw—to cry like a crow (**cawing**)

ceremonial—relating to a formal series of events that mark an important occasion

channel—a long, narrow row dug for planting seeds (**channels**)

chat—to talk in an informal, friendly way (**chatted**)

clearing—an open space in a forest

cloak—cape (**cloaks**)

coiled—spiraled

command—an order to do something (**commands**)

construct—to build (**constructed**)

copper—reddish-brown

craft—to make with skill and care (**crafted**)

critter—a small animal (**critters**)

crouch—to stoop or squat (**crouched**)

E

earn his keep—to gain a position through hard work

eerie—spooky

elder—an older person in a community who is respected and seen as having authority (**elders**)

emerge—to come into view from a hidden place (**emerging**)

eye—to look at something in a close or careful way (**eyed**)

F

flesh—the meat of an animal

flint—a type of hard rock

forefather—an ancestor (**forefathers**)

frostbite—a condition in which part of your body freezes

funnel—to pass through a narrow opening; (noun) a cone with a narrow opening at the bottom that is used to pour something into a narrow container (**funnels**)

G

generation—the average length of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children, about 25 to 30 years

germinate—to sprout

glistening—sparkling

gourd—a hard-skinned fruit that grows on a vine such as a pumpkin or squash (**gourds**)

H

harness—to attach to a set of straps that connect an animal to something it pulls (**harnessed**)

haze—smoke or mist that fills the air and makes it hard to see

headdress—a decorative head covering usually worn for special occasions (**headdresses**)

hearth—the area in front of a fireplace

hind—at the back

hitch—to connect one thing to another

hoe—a tool with a long handle and a flat blade used for gardening to loosen dirt and dig up weeds

horizon—the line in the distance where the earth or ocean seems to meet the sky

host—a large number of things

husk—the outer covering of seeds such as corn (**husks**)

K

kachina—the Hopi name for spirit (**kachinas**)

L

lead—first, serving as the leader

linger—to be slow to leave (**lingered**)

litter—a group of baby animals born at the same time to the same mother

M

mammoth—an ancient elephant that was covered with woolly fur and had long tusks that curved upward

mark its territory—an animal shows the area in which it lives by leaving some kind of mark throughout the area, such as a scent, scratches on trees or plants, or other signals

milkweed—a plant with juicy leaves

monstrous—gigantic, horrible

O

obedience—the act of following orders

offend—to make someone upset or angry through words or actions (**offended**)

P

pemmican—food eaten by Native Americans made by mixing dried, pounded, fine meat with melted fat

pouch—a small bag made of leather or fabric

preserve—to prepare food to keep for future use (**preserved**)

previous—the last one before now

puny—small and weak

R

rear—to stand up on hind legs (**reared**)

runt—the smallest animal in a litter

S

sap—liquid that flows inside a plant

scamper—to run quickly and playfully; scuttle (**scampered**)

scuttle—to run quickly and playfully; scamper

settled—living in a new place

Shaman—a person who heals the sick and communicates with spirits (**Shamans**)

shelter—a structure that covers people

slingshot—a Y-shaped stick with elastic bands attached that is used to shoot small stones (**slingshots**)

sniff—to smell something

speedily—in a fast way

spirit—a ghost of a person who has passed away (**spirits**)

sprint—to run fast for a short distance (**sprinted**)

squint—to look at with partially closed eyes (**squinted**)

stampede—to suddenly run away in fear as a large group

store—to put things away for future use (**stored**)

strip—to tear something off

succulent—rich, inviting, mouth-watering

T

talon—a sharp claw of a bird of prey (**talons**)

terrain—the shape of land

tobacco—a plant whose leaves are harvested for smoking or chewing

towline—a rope or chain used to pull something (**towlines**)

tracker—a person who follows animal tracks

trickle—to flow extremely slowly in a thin stream or drops (**trickles**)

tusk—one of two long, curved teeth that stick out of an animal's mouth, such as an elephant or walrus (**tusks**)

U

urge—to try hard to persuade (**urged**)

W

waft—to carry through the air (**wafted**)

wean—to feed a young child or animal food other than its mother's milk (**weaned**)

weary—extremely tired

wigwam—a hut made by covering a framework of wooden poles with bark or animal hides

wits—the ability to think quickly and make good decisions

wobble—to move from side to side in an unsteady way

woolly—covered with soft, thick, curly hair

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