

Snaring the Sun

For the Anishinabe people of central North America, one of the most powerful symbols for the life-force is the Sun. The need for its presence for survival is stressed in the ancient story of The Snaring of the Sun.

This story was related to early European explorers and is still told to this day in Manitoba, Canada.

According to the Anishinabe culture of Central North America, a long time ago, when animals reigned on the Earth, an orphaned sister lived on the edge of the forest with her tiny brother whose name was Pikojigiwizens. The sister looked after her brother carefully, as he was so little that a bird could have flown away with him. One day, she made him a bow and some arrows and told him to shoot some Wabanagozi or snowbirds, so that she might make him a fine coat. Some time later, while she was out walking through the forest, the little boy followed a path that his sister had warned him to stay away from. He soon became tired and lay down on a knoll where the Sun had melted the snow. He fell fast asleep and, while sleeping, the hot Sun shrunk his bird skin coat. When the boy awoke and saw the damage to his coat, he became angry with the Sun.

"Do not think you are too high", he warned, "I shall revenge myself". The sun shone brightly into his eyes and burned him. For 20 days, the little brother, mourned the loss of his coat and would not move or eat. Finally, he asked his sister to make him a snare for he meant to catch the Sun. A mass of bright threads were braided into a cord. The little boy set his snare on the exact spot where the sun would strike the land as it rose. The Sun was trapped in the snare, and although it tugged and tugged it could not get loose.

When the Sun did not come up, the animals became frightened. They called a council meeting to decide who might go and cut the cord. This was dangerous task, since the Sun was sure to burn whoever came near. Even the little brother, Pikojigiwizens tried, but the Sun was too hot. Then a tiny mouse offered to help. The animals were amused with this little mouse, but they finally agreed that it should try. The mouse climbed up the snare wire as close as possible to the Sun and to chew the cord. The mouse's coat, eyes, feet, and hands were burnt by the heat, but finally, the snare broke. The sun rose up in the sky; light and warmth once more covered the Earth. When the mouse descended to Earth, the animals saw that it had turned into a mole - its eyes were nearly closed from the blinding rays of the Sun.

To this day, the mole prefers to live in darkness.

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