

Stories of the Cahto Tribe

The Stealing of Fire

Professor Goddard's Translation

There was no fire. An orphan boy was whipped and put outside of the house. He cried there where he was thrown out. He looked and began saying, "Fire lies over there. I see fire."

"Who whipped that boy? Go and find out what he is saying."

One went out and asked, "Where did you see fire?"

"I saw fire toward the north. Look."

"Everybody look. The boy has found fire."

"So it is," said the chief. "Go after fire. Where is Coyote? Go after him. Where is Humming-bird? Get him."

"Humming-bird has come. Coyote is coming."

"Eleven of you go and get fire," commanded the chief.

They set out. They arrived at Red Mountain. Big spider was lying on the fire with his arms clasped around it.

When they had come there they said to Coyote, "Coyote, dress yourself."

"I will dress myself behind a tree," he said.

"Yes," they said.

His head(hair) became long and he put on a belt.

"Cousin, look at my hair," he said when he came out.

"Humming-bird, come, you dress."

"Yes, behind the tree."

He became blue.

"I have become red. Look at me," Humming-bird said.

"Go on, build a fire, I am going to dance," one of them told Spider.

"There is no fire," Spider said.

"Where is the fire we saw just now?" they replied.

"Everybody watch me. I will dance. Eight of you sing for me," he told them.

"Yes," they replied.

They all came to the dancing place. He danced. Then Spiders came with the fire.

"Pile up some wood," the leader said.

"Yes," they replied.

The wood was piled up. Humming-bird sat on top of it while Coyote danced. Coyote began licking his shoulders to make them laugh. Spider held to the fire and did not laugh. Coyote and Humming-bird had talked together.

"When I dance, you must carry the fire outside," Coyote said.

Coyote danced. He kept licking himself. When he reached his privates and licked them, Spider laughed. Humming-bird seized the fire and went out with it. He built a fire. As they came back from the north they burned the mountains over. Everybody along the way got some of the fire.

"Coyote and Humming-bird did well to steal the fire," the chief commented. "You must set fires toward the south. Fire will belong to all the people."

"Yes, tomorrow I will set fires."

"You must burn entirely around the world," the chief told them.

They set fires along.

"We have burned around to the middle of the world. Everybody has fire."

"Now we are getting nearly back. Walk fast. We are burning close by now."

"Yes, we are arriving."

"We have arrived."