

Creation of the Whites (Yuchi)

It was out upon the ocean. Some sea-foam formed against a big log floating there. Then a person emerged from the sea-foam and crawled out upon the log. He was seen sitting there. Another person crawled up, on the other side of the log. It was a woman. They were whites. Soon the Indians saw them, and at first thought that they were sea-gulls, and they said among themselves, "are they not white people?" Then they made a boat and went out to look at the strangers more closely.

Later on the whites were seen in their house-boat. Then they disappeared. In about a year they returned, and there were a great many of them. The Indians talked to them, but they could not understand each other. Then the whites left.

But they came back in another year with a great many ships. They approached the Indians and asked if they could come ashore. They said, "Yes." So the whites landed, but they seemed to be afraid to walk much on the water. They went away again over the sea.

This time they were gone only a short time; only three months passed and they came again. They had a box with them and asked the Indians for some earth to fill it. It was given to them as they desired. The first time they ask, they had a square box, and when that was filled, they brought a big shallow box. They filled this one too. Earth was put in them when they were carried aboard the ship, the white men planted seed in them and many things were raised. After they had taken away the shallow box, the whites came back and told the Indians that their land was very strong and fertile. So they asked the Indians to give them a portion of it that they might live on it. The Indians agreed to do it, the whites came to the shore, and they have lived there ever since.

Grandmother Spiders Oven (Yuchi)

The grandmothers also told that Grandmother Spider had a great oven in which she baked many things. Early on before she became a good cook she set on to bake a batch of people. Now the first batch she left in too long and they came out all black and burnt. The Second batch she snatched out quick so as not to burn them, but they was not done yet. So they were all pale and undercooked. She put in a third batch and got them done just right to a ruddy brown. And this is how the negroes, white people and Indians came to be.

A Shaman Predicts the Whites (Yuchi)

A Creek chief died. When the chief was dead he appeared before Gohantone (the BreathMaster), who said to him, "This land belongs to you and your children forever. This land will be yours forever, but these whites who have just come will overwhelm you and inherit your land, They will increase and the Indian will decrease and at last die out. Then only white people will remain. But there will be terrible times."

So Spoke Gohantone to the dead Creek chief. For four days he lay dead, when he came to life again. When he woke up, he was well. He immediately called a great council. Shawnee, Choctaw, Creeks and Yuchi, all assembled to hear him, and he told them all that he had seen and heard. He told them that the land would belong to the Indian forever, but the white man would over run it. So the thing is coming to pass as Gohantone said.

Stealing the Land (Yuchi)

A long time ago, the red people may have lived somewhere under the rising Sun. On this island there lived no pale-faced White people; only red men were living there. Once the water rose, covered with much water foam, right there a person came out; that person was a White man; he came to the shore, it is told; every now and then the White men left and came back again. They asked for some land, only as much as one cowhide would cover, only this much they should give them, they said. They did not want to give it, and some said, "let us kill them." Others, however, said, "We will not kill them; as much land as one cowhide would not be much," they thought, and so they gave it to them. The White men threw a cowhide into the water, when it was wet they cut it in little pieces. And then they stretched it; when they measured the four corners, they has taken very much land. When the Indians said they had not understood it was to be done that way, they answered that they had just taken as much land as one cowhide; very much land they had taken indeed.

A Yuchi Legend

Southeastern Indian traditions indicated their belief in an Upper World, a Lower World, and This World, where they, the animals and plants, lived and thrived. Early on in This World, some extraordinary humans and animals came down to visit from Upper World. Later, they returned to their previous world, where they felt more comfortable. Mankind of This World in time learned to resolve frictions and to maintain some order between themselves and the other two worlds. They became mostly villagers and agriculturists with more permanent tribal homes, since they were not nomadic by nature. Their tribes enlarged and prospered as hunters, fishermen, builders, and skilled craftsmen, including the women's abilities in weaving, basketry, and herbal medicines; the latter maintaining the good health of their people.

In the beginning, water covered everything. Wind asked, "Who will make the land? Who will make the land appear?"

Lock-chew, the Crawfish, said, "I will make the land appear."

So he went down to the bottom of the water and began to stir up the mud with his tail and his claws. He brought up some mud to a certain place and piled it up until it made a mound.

The owners of the land at the bottom of the water said, "Who is disturbing our land?" They kept careful watch and discovered it was Crawfish. When they started toward him, Crawfish stirred up the mud so much with his tail that they could not see him.

Lock-chew continued to pile up mud, until it came out on top of the surface of the great water. This is how land first appeared. It was so soft that Wind said, "Who will spread the land to make it dry and hard?"

Hawk and Buzzard appeared. Because Buzzard's wings were larger, he tried first. He flew, fanning the soft earth and spreading it all about. When he flapped his wings, hills and valleys were formed. "Who will make the light?" Wind asked. It was very dark.

Yo-hah, the Star, said, "I will make light." It was agreed. The Star shone forth, but its light only remained close to the Star.

"Who will make more light?" Wind asked.

Shar-pah, the Moon, said, "I will make enough light for all my children and I will shine forever." But the world was still too dark.

T-cho, the Sun, said, "Leave it to me to make enough light for everyone everywhere."

Sun went to the East and suddenly enough light was everywhere. As Sun traveled over the Earth, a drop of blood fell from the sky to the ground. From this spot sprang the first people, the children of the Sun they were called, the Yu-chis.

The Yu-chis wished to find their medicine since a large monster had destroyed some of their people. The Yu-chis cut off its head, but the next day its head and body were together again. They killed the monster a second time. Again, its head grew back on its body.

A third time, they cut off its head. They placed the head on top of a tall tree, so the body could not reach the head. The next morning, the tree was dead and the head had rejoined the monster's body. They killed it once more, putting its head at the top of a cedar tree. The next morning the cedar tree was still alive, but covered with blood from the head. The monster remained dead.

This is how the Yu-chis found their great medicine, the Cedar Tree. Fire was soon discovered by boring a stick into some hard, dry weeds.

The Yu-chis selected a second medicine, as each one made a picture of the Sun upon their door.

In the beginning, all of the animals could talk with one another. All animals and people were at peace. The deer lived in a cave watched over by a Yu-chis keeper. When the Yu-chis became hungry, the keeper selected a deer and killed it for their food. Finally, all of the deer were set free with the other animals, and a name was given to every animal upon the Earth.

This is how it was in the beginning with the first people, the Yu-chis Indian tribe.

The Origin of Medicine

At one time, animals and people lived together peaceably and talked with each other. But when mankind began to multiply rapidly, the animals were crowded into forests and deserts.

Man began to destroy animals wholesale for their skins and furs, not just for needed food. Animals became angry at such treatment by their former friends, resolving they must punish mankind.

The bear tribe met in council, presided over by Old White Bear, their Chief. After several bears had spoken against mankind for their bloodthirsty ways, war was unanimously agreed upon. But what kinds of weapons should the bears use?

Chief Old White Bear suggested that man's weapon, the bow and arrow, should be turned against him. All of the council agreed. While the bears worked and made bows and arrows, they wondered what to do about bowstrings. One of the bears sacrificed himself to provide the strings, while the others searched for good arrow-wood.

When the first bow was completed and tried, the bear's claws could not release the strings to shoot the arrow. One bear offered to cut his claws, but Chief Old White Bear would not allow him to do that, because without claws he could not climb trees for food and safety. He might starve.

The deer tribe called together its council led by Chief Little Deer. They decided that any Indian hunters, who killed deer without asking pardon in a suitable manner, should be afflicted with painful rheumatism in their joints.

After this decision, Chief Little Deer sent a messenger to their nearest neighbours, the Cherokee Indians.

"From now on, your hunters must first offer a prayer to the deer before killing him," said the messenger. "You must ask his pardon, stating you are forced only by the hunger needs of your tribe to kill the deer. Otherwise, a terrible disease will come to the hunter."

When a deer is slain by an Indian hunter, Chief Little Deer will run to the spot and ask the slain deer's spirit, "Did you hear the hunter's prayer for pardon?"

If the reply is yes, then all is well and Chief Little Deer returns to his cave. But if the answer is no, then the Chief tracks the hunter to his lodge and strikes him with the terrible disease of rheumatism, making him a helpless cripple unable to hunt again.

All the fishes and reptiles then held a council and decided they would haunt those Cherokee Indians, who tormented them, by telling them hideous dreams of serpents twining around them and eating them alive. These snake and fish dreams occurred often among the Cherokees. To get relief, the Cherokees pleaded with their Shaman to banish their frightening dreams if they no longer tormented the snakes and fish.

Now when the friendly plants heard what the animals had decided against mankind, they planned a countermove of their own. Each tree, shrub, herb, grass, and moss agreed to furnish a cure for one of the diseases named by the animals and insects.

Thereafter, when the Cherokee Indians visited their Shaman about their ailments and if the medicine man was in doubt, he communed with the spirits of the plants. They always suggested a proper remedy for mankind's diseases.

This was the beginning of plant medicine from nature among the Cherokee Indian nation a long, long time ago.

The First Fire

In the beginning of the world, there was no fire. The animal people were often cold. Only the Thunders, who lived in the world beyond the sky arch, had fire. At last they sent Lightning down to an island. Lightning put fire into the bottom of a hollow sycamore tree.

The animal people knew that the fire was there, because they could see smoke rising from the top of the tree. But they could not get to it on account of the water. So they held a council to decide what to do.

Everyone that could fly or could swim was eager to go after the fire. Raven said, "Let me go. I am large and strong."

At that time Raven was white. He flew high and far across the water and reached the top of the sycamore tree. While he sat there wondering what to do, the heat scorched all his feathers black. The frightened Raven flew home without the fire, and his feathers have been black ever since.

Then the council sent Screech Owl. He flew to the island. But while he was looking down into the hollow tree, a blast of hot air came up and nearly burned out his eyes. He flew home and to this day, Screech Owl's eyes are red.

Then Hooting Owl and Horned Owl were sent to the island together. But the smoke nearly blinded them, and the ashes carried up by the wind made white rings about their eyes. They had to come home, and were never able to get rid of the white rings.

Then Little Snake swam across to the island, crawled through the grass to the tree, and entered it through a small hole at the bottom. But the smoke and the heat were too much for him, too. He escaped alive, but his body had been scorched black. And it was so twisted that he doubled on his track as if always trying to escape from a small space.

Big Snake, the climber, offered to go for fire, but he fell into the burning stump and became as black as Little Snake. He has been the great blacksnake ever since.

At last Water Spider said that she would go. Water Spider has black downy hair and red stripes on her body. She could run on top of water and she could dive to the bottom. She would have no trouble in getting to the island.

"But you are so little, how will you carry enough fire?" the council asked.

"I'll manage all right," answered Water Spider. "I can spin a web." so she spun a thread from her body and wove it into a little bowl and fastened the little bowl on her back. Then she crossed over to the island and through the grass. She put one little coal of fire into her bowl and brought it across to the people.

Every since, we have had fire. And the Water Spider still has her little bowl



Creation of the World (Yuchi) -- The Original Intelligent Design Story

Our Grandparents tell that in the beginning time after Grandmother Spider captured the Sun and she volunteered to give his light to the world, Gohantoney, the Creator bid her to bring order to all she had created. She took note of all the animals and their talents and began weaving the web of life. She saw to it that each animal, plant and stone was connected to everything else, and that it all would function with perfect efficiency. If she found a hole that needed a creature to serve a function not being filled, she would report this to Gohantoney, who would create a creature to fill it. After quite a bit of trial and error, they got the whole thing to work and Grandmother Earth was born.

All the animals came together to help decide how things should be. Now Grandmother Spider had had Gohantoney make a host of spider children to assist her. One of these was wayward Yonweeke. Well, Yonweeke was jealous of Gohantoney's power of creation, and plotted to steal some of it for himself. So, Yonweeke took a little of Gohantoney's power and hid it away. The animals hearing him brag about it, said share it with us. We want to be able to create more of our kind.

Yonweeke said he thought he could share a wee bit, but fearing it would take all he had said, "I haven't enough to give all of you the power of procreation, You will have to share it and come together in twos to create more of your kind. So, Yonweeke created sex, giving part of the necessary procreative power to half the creatures and another part to the other half. One half got a little more, and are called females, but none got enough to procreate on their own.

The animals said, "how are we to know who has which part?" So, Yonweeke made males appear different from females. But soon, the females complained that the males weren't interested enough to join in procreation. Yonweeke tiring of this constant request for more of his ill-gotten power, said he would make males interested. So, he gave every male a healthy dose of interest here.

Well, Gohantoney looked around and noticed that the world was getting more than a mite crowded. She began investigating and soon found that the animals were creating themselves. She ask the animals, "where did you get this power?" "We got it from Yonweeke," they all said. Gohantoney called Yonweeke and demanded back what had been taken. Yonweeke gave back what was left, but the animals would not give their power of procreation back.

Gohantoney said, "but you will soon overrun the world." The animals still would not give the power of procreation back. So, Gohantoney said: "So be it! I will have to create death and decay to balance the world." The animals not understanding said well then we will have death and decay.

Gohantoney created death and Grandmother Spider decided how long each animal should live, and wove it into the web of life. Gohantoney created decay, and Grandmother Spider wove this change into the web. She decided each animal would eat to replenish themselves, and that some would eat each other so there would be enough death to keep the web in balance. She wove a fine and delicate web to link all these things in just the right balance.

The animals did not like death and decay, but would not give up their procreation. Gohantoney seeing the misery that death brought, taught the animals spirit calling ceremonies. With these ceremonies, they would be able to visit with their departed brethren. The animals then accepted death as a necessary trade-off for sex and procreation.

The Spirit lodge is still built, and we go there to seek counsel and companionship of our grandparents, and to hear stories like this one of how it all came to be as it is. This should be sufficient for now.

The Origin of The Yuchi

The Tsoyaha were born from the blood of our Grandmother Tso the Sun. While this lineage has been kept quite pure, the truth is we are all born of the union between the Sun and the Earth. We are all made of starstuff, and Sun's energy combines with earth's matter to bring forth life. We are one people with many cultures. We are though all related two-legged, four-legged, finned, winged, creepy, greens and stone -- all born from the same parentage.

It is true that we all need an anchor point to place our roots, in order to know who we are and where we are going. Our stories give us this necessary perspective in which to place ourselves. In our genealogies are the millions who lived before, including an Apatosaurus and a couple of trilobites, for we are built of recycled carbon, and it is all still written on our DNA.

The Children of the Sun are special because they seek to remember their direct descent from Grandmother Sun and Grandmother Earth. They remember it in their story telling cycles and in the Green Corn Ceremony, but most of all they remember it in the name of the people -- Tsoyaha!

Children of the Sun

Our Tsoyaha Grandparents tell us of our origin in the beginning time. After Gohantoney and Grandmother Spider had weaved the web of life, Gohantoney realized that something was missing. The Web buzzed with life, but it was without the spirit of consciousness. The animals all knew, but they did not know that they knew.

Gohantoney felt that the web should vibrate with spirit and vitality, and so decided to enter into the web Herself. First She entered into the hare, but the hare could not contain Her. Then She entered into the bear, but bear could not contain Her either. So, then She tried to enter Grandmother Earth, but she quaked and split at her seams. So, finally Gohantoney decided She must find something that could contain Her being. She then entered the Sun, which shuttered and spit great tongues of fire, but just managed to contain Her.

The effort at Containment rained much fire down upon the world. Great balls of fire punched holes in the land. One chased down bear and burned his beautiful tail off. Well, Yonweeke seeing all this rain of fire, decided something must be done to stop this firestorm. He took his atlatl and arrow, and waited for the Sun to pass over. When Sun was directly overhead, he flung the arrow into the Sun. The wound relieved the Sun of its swollen rage. As She passed over a few drops of her blood fell to earth. As they fell grandmother Spider gathered them up and wove them into cocoons. The Tsoyaha sprung from these cocoons as the direct descendants of the Sun.

This is how the Tsoyaha came to be, and if on a foggy morning you look at the Sun as it rises, you can sometimes see the wound from Yonweeke's arrow still on her face. Unfortunately, while the people know that they know, many have forgotten what to know that they know. This is sufficient for now.

Mankind is Dropped and Shattered

Long ago, soon after the world came to be, man was created. This all occurred here in the Southeastern part of Turtle Island, after Creator's blood fell to the Earth, and grandmother Spider gathered it and bound it into silk cocoons. These cocoons were to become men, but they were dropped and shattered. The blood that Grandmother Spider failed to gather can be seen to stain the ground throughout our lands. These red clays grow our corn in the Sun and still nurture us with Creator's blood and warmth.

Grandmother Spider wrapped Creator's blood into cocoons, and hung them in her web. The cocoons held several types of people (species not races). These developing peoples were to be quite different. Some would be gentle, soft feminine creatures; others were aggressive, bold, masculine creatures. However, all were balanced and adapted to their roles in the web of life. Before these creatures could come forth from their cocoons, a large gryphon flew into the web knocking the cocoons loose. They fell to the ground, and broke into a myriad of pieces.

Grandmother Spider gathered the pieces and reassembled the peoples as best she could. The gryphons, being chimeric experts, did their best to help. Try as they may, they could not put them back as they had been. She managed to assemble a single people that were fragmented and fractured, and wanting of being whole. They had unfilled voids. Some of the parts into which they were assembled warred with each other. They were a bundle of contradictions. They were one people, but they spoke many different languages, held different beliefs, and saw things quite differently. Many held opposing opinions simultaneously in their individual minds -- being of two minds, both believing and disbelieving at the same time.

This is why there is only one species of mankind, but we view the world so differently. We are made of many different parts that fit together but poorly. Some of us got duplicate parts and so lack the trait of balance. Some got too much feeling and became liberals, poor at thinking straight, while others got too much thinking, and became conservatives, lacking feelings. Some lacked courage, tolerance or compassion, or some other part. There were every possible mixture among them.

We all want to be whole, but are often confused, or afraid and groping. We do not know what we lack, and fear to change and seek balance. We prefer to gather in groups with like imbalances, and proclaim our imagined perfection. We are in need of some perspective, so we can see the wholeness plan, and figure out how we can best reassemble ourselves the way we were meant to be. When whole again, the walls will come down, and we will no longer be alone, confused and frustrated. This is what I was told, and it is enough for now.

We are all related and part of one another.

-----Woktela, with all his pieces laid out for another attempt at assembly.

The Crack in the World

by Woktela

Our grandfathers tell the story of the opening of the crack in the world. It is the job of our medicine man to open the crack in the world so that we can obtain understandings of our healing. Through the portal of these cracks, we have seen through time and space. We have seen great understanding, and understood more than we know. Through the crack, we have seen the great beasts that walk the earth no more. We have seen the great, fiery visitors strike the earth, like the one that made the great crater in Arizona. We have visited the strange life forms on other worlds and we have known the stars. We have learned much at the feet of our Grandfathers through the crack in the world. This is how it began.

One day, Mole announced that while solitarily tunneling through Grandmother Earth, he had discovered cracks in the world. All the creatures gathered around to hear Mole's stories of what he had seen through the cracks in the world. The animals found Mole's stories to be quite incredible and strange. Many animals tired of Mole's fanciful tales, and called them balderdash. "He has eaten the fungal flesh, and it has warped his vision of reality," said Squirrel.

"He has lost touch with the true reality," said Chipmunk.

"Let us have no more to do with Mole's mental flatulence," said Flying Squirrel. So, many animals left Mole telling his tales, and went back about their business.

Some animals continued to listen, spellbound. A few asked Mole to teach them to find the cracks in the world so that they, too, might see these things for themselves. Mole taught them, and they told their tales. The majority of the animals, however, shunned them as being crazed, or meddling in matters that were best left alone.

One day, Squirrel was distraught. His teeth were wearing out faster than they could grow. Without his teeth, he could not eat. He went to Beaver and asked his advice, but Beaver had no idea what he should do. Squirrel went from animal to animal, but no one could advise him. Then he asked Groundhog, who suggested that he was sure that Mole could help.

Squirrel went to Mole and told him of his plight. Mole said, "This is certainly beyond all experience. I will go through the crack in the world and find the answer."

Mole asked Squirrel to sit in his dark hole with him, and soon Squirrel soon began to hear a rattle. It sounded as if Mole were bouncing all about. After some time, Mole spoke to Squirrel. Mole said, "You must find bones and gnaw them."

Squirrel said, "That sounds as if it would only wear away my teeth faster."

Mole only replied that it was the advice the Grandfathers gave him.

Squirrel went off and found some bones, and gnawed them with the nubs of his teeth. After a few weeks, his teeth began to grow in faster, and were soon again their proper length. Old Squirrel soon grew fat again. All the animals asked him, "How is it that you solved your problem?" He told them of Mole's healing medicine gotten through the crack in the world.

Mole was the first Shaman, you see. He taught other animals his skills. They taught men, and it has been passed from one generation to another down to us here. We have but to look to see the cracks. We have only to strive to open them and meet the harmony to make our needed medicine.

This is enough now

Woktela aka David K. Hackett. This story is from a collection of both traditional and modern tales first recounted on the **GENIE Computer Network** (Cat 13, Top 14 & 3), Native American Spirituality Bulletin Board in 1991. This story was also published in **Four Directions American Indian Literary Quarterly** Vol:1 No. 2 p100. It is based in a traditional story.