

## **Superstitions, myths, and legends:**

### **Common American Superstitions today might include:**

Bigfoot, aliens, loch ness monster, knock on wood, walking under a ladder, breaking a mirror, a black cat, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, throw salt over your shoulder, etc.

These are so intertwined, that you probably can not tell where beliefs, myths, legends stop and separate. Are they just folklore or sacred teaching that you are expected to practice?

Meaning / symbolism -

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| 1. owl – evil, bad omen, death  | 5. Snake – healing and rebirth          |
| 2. circle – equality, completion of all elements (N,S,E,W, or wind, fire, earth, water) and reincarnation | 6. Turtle – good health long life       |
| 3. eagle – divine, creation, freedom  | 7. Bear – courage, strength, leadership |
| 4. fox – anticipation, observation  | 8. Buffalo – abundance, gratitude       |
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**Blackfoot mythology** says that creation came about when “Napioa” (the sun or old man) took mud from a turtles mouth. Napioa sent a small animal to get two bags containing summer and winter, but the animal was decapitated by the guardian of the two bags. This in turn caused the creation of wind. When Feather Woman dug up the Great Turnip after being told not to do so, she was cast out of Sky Country, representing the fall of man from perfection.

One of many **Crow creation stories** for the physical world recalls that Old Man Coyote (OMC) was alone in a large ocean when he saw two male ducks floating upon its surface. Old Man Coyote encourages one of the ducks to dive, which he does, and after a nervous wait the duck finally surfaces with a root in its beak. Another dangerous dive brings up mud. With this soil Old Man Coyote builds first an island, and then all the lands of the Earth. However the Earth is empty, so Old Man Coyote uses the root to populate the planet with plants and trees. Despite this success the Earth was still not right, it was too flat, so OMC shaped the land to create the rivers, mountains and all geographical features. Again something was

missing, Old Man Coyote and the ducks wanted friends, so he moulded Man out of the clay. But Old Man Coyote wanted Man to be happy so he created Women too so that they may be contented together and multiply.

According to **Lakota belief**, Inyan, the Rock, was present at the very beginning, and so was the omnipresent spirit Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery, and the darkness Han. Inyan wanted to exercise his powers, or compassion, so he created Maka (the Earth) as part of himself to keep control of his powers. But he sacrificed much of his blood by doing so, which became water, and he shriveled up, became hard, and begins losing his powers. The water cannot retain his powers, and Skan was created. Maka complains to Inyan that everything is cold and dark, and so he creates Anpao, the Dawn. As Anpao's red light was not enough for Maka, Inyan creates Wi, the Sun.

Maka now wanted to be separate from Inyan, so he appealed to Skan, who is now the supreme judge of the universe.

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Additional researched from these articles –

Wikipedia –

The **mythologies of the indigenous peoples of North America** comprise many bodies of traditional narratives associated with religion from a mythographical perspective. Indigenous North American belief systems include many sacred narratives. Such spiritual stories are deeply based in Nature and are rich with the symbolism of seasons, weather, plants, animals, earth, water, sky and fire. The principle of an all embracing, universal and omniscient Great Spirit, a connection to the Earth, diverse creation narratives and collective memories of ancient ancestors are common. Traditional worship practices are often a part of tribal gatherings with dance, rhythm, songs and trance (e.g. the sun dance).

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I am a full blood Cherokee woman and that is a very special thing to me. In my own way, I feel like I know a lot of the old ways but there are things that I do not fully understand about the Cherokee traditions.

I was born into a family that lived on faith, and being Cherokee there are a lot of things that we do that others don't. There are things that are done in ways only we would appreciate, for instance, there are certain numbers that play an important role in the Cherokee ceremonies - such as the number four and seven.

They occur in our myths, stories and ceremonies; four represents the four directions (north, east, west, and south). There are also certain colors associated with the four directions.

The number seven represents the seven clans of the Cherokee people and these are: Bird, Deer, Wolf, Longhair, Wild Potato, Blue, and Paint. Other myths, legends, and superstitions are we think the owl is the bearer of bad news or brings bad luck. Because we have been taught that they are messengers which means they bring news.

To us the cedar, pine, spruce, laurel and holly trees have very special powers because the leaves that grow on them stay green all year long. We believe these were the plants that did not sleep for seven nights during the creation. They are some of the most important plants to the native's medicine and ceremonies.

There are a lot of things that people today consider myths and legends and those are stories like the ones passed down from generation to generation. Natives are very spiritual people and although we can share a few stories, there are a lot of things we are not able to share with others.

Things like these are what we were raised to believe and occasionally I get calls at work from people who want to know of something like our traditions such as: something different that they can do at a funeral or something that is different than in today's society.

Many people are interested because they are part Cherokee or even another tribe. As an adult now I have many stories and remembrance of things that was taught to us. While growing up I did not think I was any different. People really seem to enjoy hearing stories of things that I thought everyone knew.

Today I like to sit down with the elders if at all possible and listen to their stories, and most of the time we compare our stories. They know so much about things that have happened in their lifetime through what people know today as myths.

So how much are myths and legends? How much is real in our hearts? I think this is something that keeps us unique from all others, but I also know everyone is unique within their own culture. Everyone has a culture to share no matter what that may be and your elders have taught you things only your tribe or culture knows.

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In nearly all cultures, myths and legends can serve as cautionary tales, keeping one foot in practical reality and the other in the realm of the supernatural... and it's no surprise that the most effective cautionary tales are also the scariest.

The ancient lore of the indigenous peoples of North America are as varied and far-reaching as the continent itself, and unless you're well-versed in native lore, you might not realize how many of those tales are populated by horrifying spirits, ghosts, witches, demons and monsters... and since we're in the scare business, we're going to share the most nightmarish ones with you.

Many of the frightening creatures listed below span multiple tribes — and in some cases, hundreds of generations. So if you investigate their origins further, you'll see they have many different names and traits, depending on where their tales are told.

In other words, there are evil forces lurking *everywhere*... so you'd better do your homework!

### **Camazotz: The Death Bat**

This ferocious creature originates with the ancient Mayans, who depicted him as a powerful god-monster from the hellish domain of Xibalba, where he presides over swarms of bloodthirsty vampire bats. Though powerful enough to destroy entire civilizations, Camazotz made a treaty with human beings to bring them fire... but in exchange, he demanded human sacrifices.

### **Chenoo: The Ice Giant**

Though some tales describe the Chenoo as a Bigfoot-like creature, the original legend from the Wabanaki people tells that he was once a human, but at some point committed a horrible crime, for which the gods cursed him and turned his heart to ice. His frozen spirit was then trapped within the body of a lumbering, troll-like monster, who devours any human he can get his hands on.

### **Kanontsistonties: The Flying Heads**

Iroquois myths include some nightmarish tales, but the Flying Heads are the creepiest by a long shot. There are many stories about these evil creatures, most of which portray them as a kind of vampire, and they vary in size from tiny to humongous. The most familiar story involves one of the beasts attacking a woman who was roasting chestnuts; the creature accidentally ingested a hot coal from the fire, which burned it to ashes.

### **Mishipeshu: The Water-Panther**

The story of the Water-Panther spans multiple tribes, including Cree, Algonquin, Ojibwe, and Shawnee. It's usually described as a giant dragon-like feline, and the most common element is the monster's aquatic habitat; it lurks in lakes and rivers, waiting for humans to come close to the water, then pulls them under and drowns them. It's even said to have a snaky, prehensile tail that aids it in snaring its prey.

### **Yee Naaldlooshii: The Skinwalker**

Known mainly to Navajo folklore, the Skinwalker is essentially the North American equivalent of the werewolf. In most tales, the creature is a magical or cursed human being — usually a shaman who takes part in a heretical ceremony designed to summon evil forces, so that he may take on the characteristics of an animal. That animal can take many forms, including wolves, bears and birds. If the shaman stays too long in animal form, he can lose his humanity completely — which makes him even more dangerous.

### **Skudakumooch: The Ghost-Witch**

One of the scariest figures in Passamaquoddy and Micmac mythology, the Ghost-Witch is often said to be born from the dead body of a shaman who practiced black magic; the demonic entity then emerges each night with murder on its mind. They can be killed with fire, but beware if approaching one: simply making eye contact or hearing the witch's voice can bring a diabolical curse down on the unwary.

### **Tah-tah-kle'-ah: The Owl-Women**

From the Yakama tribe come tales of five supernatural women who resemble giant owls, dwelling in caves by day and flying out at night to prey on all manner of creatures — including humans. In fact, they are said to prefer the taste of children. Legend has it they can hunt humans by mimicking their language. The owl itself is a symbol of death in many native cultures, so owl-women are essentially a walking embodiment of death itself.

### **Teihiihan: The Little Cannibals**

Among the most dreaded figures in Cheyenne and Arapaho legends (and more), these savage humanoids may be child-sized, but they're incredibly strong, and often attack in large numbers. According to some myths, the Teihiihan were fearsome warriors in a previous life, resurrected as dwarves after dying in battle. Most of those tales say they were finally wiped out by an alliance of several tribes.

### **Uktena: The Horned Serpent**

Cherokee legends prominently feature this dragon-like behemoth, which is believed to have originated as a human, taking the serpentine shape to seek vengeance on those who wronged them. Much like the dragons of European myth, there are stories of men proving their bravery by confronting one of the powerful beasts, who are also lightning-fast and can devour a person in one bite.

### **Wendigo: The Evil That Devours**

Arguably the most powerful and deadly creature in North American folklore, the Wendigo appears in many tribal legends, but the best-known description comes from communities surrounding the Great Lakes region. Many of the legends are cautionary tales enforcing taboos against cannibalism, by claiming that any human who eats another's flesh will be transformed into a creature of pure evil — a form of *Manitou* cursed with insatiable appetite. Not even loved ones are safe from their eternal hunger.