

Native American Heritage Day in a Box

Shawnee: Brother Crow and Brother Buffalo

The crow was pure white in the beginning. He was the brother to the buffalo. The Shawnee needed the buffalo for food and skins but everytime the Shawnee would hunt the buffalo, the crow would warn him.

The hunting party gathered around the campfire to prepare for the hunt. Cawanemua said, "We must do something about crow. I will dress as a buffalo and when brother crow comes to warn the buffalo of our hunt, I will grab him."

The next day, Cawanemua pulled the buffalo skin over him and joined the herd grazing near by. Sure enough, crow came warning the buffalo as the Shawnee hunters approached. Crow was crying, "Caw, Caw, hunters afar!" Cawanemau jumped up and caught crow by his legs and carried him back to the camp.

That night, around the fire as the hunters discussed the fate of crow, Panseau, the smallest brave listened and watched crow. Some wanted to kill and eat crow, since they were very hungry and crow had spoiled the hunt by warning the buffalo. Others wanted to let crow go, thinking that he had learned his lesson and would not warn buffalo again.

Cawanemau was getting more and more angry...he grabbed crow and threw him in the fire. Panseau seeing crow turning black from the fire and soot....grabbed him from the flames. Cawanemau was furious with Panseau. He yelled, "Crow decieves us, we are hungry and cold because he warns buffalo!!! Yet you save him from the flames!!" Panseau, in a small voice, quietly said, "Crow warns his brother. Just as I would warn you, my brother."

Crow, who was shaken and blackened from the flames, heard Panseau. Everyone was very still, thinking about what Panseau the smallest brave had said. Crow spoke, " I am blackened for warning buffalo, who is my brother. I now say Shawnee is my brother also. I will never warn buffalo of your hunt and you, brother Shawnee, will remember to give thanks to buffalo for giving himself to you for food to fill your belly and skins to keep you warm.

Cawanemau stood. "Crow is our brother. Buffalo is our brother also. We will only hunt buffalo when we need food and skins. We will remember to always give thanks. Brother crow will remain black, so he too can remember and remind us of his promise to never warn our brother buffalo." That my friends is how the crow became black.

