



Reading #2 Ute Creation Story - Southern Ute

Unit 1 Lesson 1

In the day even before the ancient times only Sinawavi*, the Creator, and Coyote inhabited the earth. They had come out of the light so long ago that no one remembered when or how. The earth was young, and the time had now come to increase the people.

Sinawavi gave a bag of sticks to Coyote and said, “Carry these over the far hills to the valleys beyond.” He gave specific directions Coyote was to follow and told him what to do when he got there. “You must remember this is a great responsibility. The bag must not be opened under any circumstances* until you reach the sacred ground,” he told him. “What is this I carry?” asked Coyote. “I will say no more. Now be about your task,” Sinawavi answered.

Coyote was young and foolish, consumed with curiosity. “What is this that I carry?” he kept asking himself. As soon as he was over the first hill and out of sight, he stopped. He was just going to peak in the bag. “That could hurt nothing,” he thought.

Just as he untied the bag and opened a small slit, they rushed for the opening. They were people. These people yelled and hollered in strange languages of all kinds. He tried to catch them and get them back into the bag. But they ran away in all different directions.

From the feel of the bag after he had gotten it closed, he could tell there was only a fraction of what he had started out with. He went to the sacred valley and dumped them out there. There was a small number of these people. Coyote then returned and told Sinawavi that he had completed the task.

Sinawavi searched Coyote’s face. “I know,” Sinawavi sighed. “You foolish thing! You do not know what a fearful thing you have done.”





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Coyote finally confessed. “I tried to catch them. I was frightened. They spoke in strange tongues that I couldn’t understand.”

“Those you let escape will forever war with the chosen ones. They will be the tribes which will always be a thorn in the side of the Utes,” said Sinawavi. “The Utes, even though they are few in number, will be the mightiest and most valiant of heart!” Sinawavi then cursed Coyote. “You are an irresponsible meddler*! From this time on you are doomed to wander this earth on all fours forever as a night prowler.”

*circumstances: an event or situation that you cannot control

*meddler: to become involved in the activities and concerns of other people when your involvement is not wanted

*Sinawavi: The Ute Creator

Source: Excerpted from *Teaching Ute History and Culture to Younger Students*.

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