



Creation Myths

Long ago our Native language was not written down. It was passed down orally from generation to generation. Traditionally, stories were told in the winter when we were indoors most of the day. It was considered bad luck to tell stories outside of winter time. During the other seasons we were busy hunting and gathering to prepare for winter, so there was no time to sit and tell stories. Traditional stories were told by Elders and they were repeated again and again with the exact words. That is how the stories were passed on from generation to generation.

Each tribe may have their own stories depending on the history of their tribe. A lot of the stories were told in order to teach a lesson about the proper way to live or conduct yourself. For example: you might have a story about a child not listening to their Elders and then something happening to that child as a consequence. But stories were also told to share history and culture and as a way to pass down the traditions of the tribe. These stories also help strengthen the community and provide tribes with a common understanding of the world around them. Stories were also told to explain how something or someone was formed or came about. These stories are called creation myths. These stories help us understand how our ancestors saw and understood the world around them.

Many stories include supernatural beings and/or natural phenomena. Animals play a significant role in Native American stories. Each animal signifies a specific trait. Today, stories still play an important role in Native communities. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is continually working to record oral histories and stories from Elders so we can continue to keep that part of our culture alive and pass it onto many generations to come.