

'Storytelling is an art form that transcends age, race and culture.

It goes right to the heart of human experience.' □-- Storyteller
Bobby Norfolk

Storytelling is defined by the National Council of Teachers of English as “relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gestures.” Visitors to Homestead National Monument of America experienced some of the best storytelling the first week in May.

Storytelling was popular entertainment until it was replaced by movies, television, videos, and DVDs relegating it to the children’s section of the library. But storytelling has recently enjoyed a resurgence and the Heartland Storytelling Festival was started in the 1990s at the Monument.

Three well known storytellers-Rosie Cutrer, Otto Rosfield, and Pippa White- held a workshop for students and their teachers on May 7 and 8 and concluded with a public performance at 7 p.m. on May 8.

Historians say there are several reasons why storytelling has been a part of our culture. They believe storytelling, according to the Reading Is Fundamental website (<http://www.rif.org/educators/articles/storytelling.msp>) was used to

Communicate experiences to other humans
Honor supernatural forces

Make sense of the world

Record the actions and characteristics of our ancestors for future generations

Satisfy a need for play and entertainment

Settle arguments

Teach history

Native Americans and homesteaders both used storytelling for these reasons. One Native American story explains the origins of fire and was found at the Native American Culture Stories and Legends website

(<http://www.ewebtribe.com/NAculture/stories.htm>.)

Long, long ago, animals and trees talked with each other, but there was no fire at that time. □ □ Fox was most clever and he tried to think of a way to create fire for the world. One day, he decided to visit the Geese, te-tl, whose cry he wished to learn how to imitate. They promised to teach him if he would fly with them. So they contrived a way to attach wings to Fox, but cautioned him never to open his eyes while flying. □ □ Whenever the Geese arose in flight, Fox also flew along with them to practice their cry. On one such adventure, darkness descended suddenly as they flew over the village of the fireflies, ko-na- tcic-a. In midflight, the glare from the flickering fireflies caused Fox to forget and he opened his eyes--instantly his wings collapsed! His fall was uncontrollable. He landed within the walled area of the firefly village, where a fire constantly burned in the centre. □ □ Two kind fireflies came to see fallen Fox, who gave each one a necklace of juniper berries, katl-te-i-tse. □ □ Fox hoped to persuade the two fireflies to tell him where he could find a way over the wall to the outside.

They led him to a cedar tree, which they explained would bend down upon command and catapult him over the wall if he so desired. □ □ That evening, Fox found the spring where fireflies obtained their water. There also, he discovered coloured earth, which when mixed with water made paint. He decided to give himself a coat of white. Upon returning to the village, Fox suggested to the fireflies, "Let's have a festival where we can dance and I will produce the music." □ □ They all agreed that would be fun and helped to gather wood to build up a greater fire. Secretly, Fox tied a piece of cedar bark to his tail. Then he made a drum, probably the first one ever constructed, and beat it vigorously with a stick for the dancing fireflies. Gradually, he moved closer and closer to the fire. □ □ Fox pretended to tire from beating the drum. He gave it to some fireflies who wanted to help make the music. Fox quickly thrust his tail into the fire, lighting the bark, and exclaimed, "It is too warm here for me, I must find a cooler place." □ □ Straight to the cedar tree Fox ran, calling, "Bend down to me, my cedar tree, bend down! Down bent the cedar tree for Fox to catch hold, then up it carried him far over the wall. On and on he ran, with the fireflies in pursuit. □ □ As Fox ran along, brush and wood on either side of his path were ignited from the sparks dropping from the burning bark tied to his tail. □ □ Fox finally tired and gave the burning bark to Hawk, i-tsarl-tsu- i, who carried it to brown Crane, tsi-nes-tso-l. He flew far southward, scattering fire sparks everywhere. This is how fire first spread over the earth. □ □ Fireflies continued chasing Fox all the way to his burrow and declared, "Forever after, Wily Fox, your punishment for stealing our fire will be that

you can never make use of it for yourself." □ □ For the Apache nation, this too was the beginning of fire for them. Soon they learned to use it for cooking their food and to keep themselves warm in cold weather.

Homesteaders had stories to tell and the following is about a topic still common on the Great Plains, the weather.

Drought Buster was found at American Folklore website (<http://www.americanfolklore.net/folktales/ne.html>) and is retold by S. E. Schlosser.

Back in the early days, the Plains folk were often in need of a good drought buster during the hot summer months. The sun would shine and shine, and the clouds would scuttle right quick over the Plains without dropping rain. One year, it got so bad that Febold Feboldson, that legendary Swede who could bust the driest drought in a day, got annoyed. He liked his fishin', right enough, and there was no fishin' to be had in that drought. So he sat down and thought up a way to bust that there drought.

Febold Feboldson decided to build huge bonfires around all the lakes in the region. If he kept the fires real hot, the lake water would evaporate and form clouds. Febold set to work at once hauling wood and building bonfires. Soon, there were so many clouds in the sky on account of all the vaporizing water that they bumped into one another and made rain.

Once the pump was primed, so to speak, the rains came regularly again. But were the settlers happy? No sir. Now

they had no place to swim!

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