

# The Origin of Fire:

## An Apache Folk Tale



Long ago, when the world was freshly made, the animals and trees could speak with each other. The world was a wonderful place to explore throughout the changing seasons, but there was no fire.

Fox was a clever beast and he was determined to create fire for the animals to share. But how could he travel far and wide? At last he came upon a plan to fly and so he visited the geese, asking them to teach him their cry and how to fly. The geese agreed to teach Fox if he would fly with them. So, they began inventing a set of wings to attach to him. At last, everything was ready. Fox was eager to fly but the geese gave a stern warning, "You must never open your eyes while flying!"

Each time the geese flew, Fox joined the flock, calling out to them as he practised his cry. On one occasion, the sun set quite suddenly and they found themselves wrapped in darkness. As they searched for a place to land, they passed over the Village of the Fireflies. Still in the air, Fox sensed a flickering glare and he opened his eyes, forgetting the warning the geese had given him. All at once, his wings collapsed and he plummeted to the ground.



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Shaken but unhurt, Fox found himself in the centre of the Firefly Village. There he gazed upon a fire that constantly burned in the centre. Two kind fireflies rushed to help poor Fox. He accepted their kindness and offered the gift of a juniper necklace to them in thanks.



As he talked with the fireflies, Fox asked about a way over the wall that surrounded the village. He was taken to a cedar tree. "This tree will bend at your command and catapult you over the wall," the fireflies told him.



Fox explored the village until he came to a fresh water spring. He mixed coloured earth with water, turning his fur white with the paint he had made. Hearing voices, he returned to the village centre. "Let us dance and make music," he suggested. What fun they had! Wood was piled on the fire, making it burn brightly. Fox gathered a cedar stick and tied it to his tail; then, making a drum, he beat it in a magnificent rhythm for the dancing fireflies. As the music and dance became more energetic, Fox crept closer and closer to the fire. Pretending to tire from the drumming, he passed the drum to his firefly friends.

When no one was watching, he thrust his tail, still holding the cedar bark, into the flames. Quick as a flash, he ran to the cedar tree calling, "Bend down to me, my cedar

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tree, bend down!" At his command, the cedar tree lowered a graceful branch and carried Fox up and over the wall.



As his paws touched the ground, Fox ran. He ran so fast it was almost as if he was flying again. Not far behind, the fireflies were in pursuit, furious that their fire had been stolen.

Fox ran and ran. The bush and wood on either side of the trail ignited with the sparks that fell from the bark still tied to his tail. Ahead, he spied Hawk. "Take the burning bark from me!" he called. Hawk did as Fox asked, flying up and away until he met Crane. "Take the burning bark and fly south!" shrieked Hawk and off Crane flew, sparks scattering across the earth as he went.

This is how fire first spread across the earth.

The fireflies had not given up the chase, following Fox all the way to his home in a burrow. They were furious and scolded him, saying "You stole our fire, wily Fox, but forever more you will never be able to use it for yourself."

So, fire came to the world and to the Apache nation too. The animals could not use it, but people learned to use it for cooking and warmth.

