

**Crow Creation Story told by Grant Bulltail  
(2015, translated by Grant in 2016)**

Nobody knows where the stories have begun but we still carry on the traditions. I heard these stories from my grandmother's cousin Yellow Brow, and then from Comes Up Red And that's why I know these stories.

We don't know, we don't know who told these original stories, but when I was told these stories I thought about them real hard and thought about the sequences, the way that it should happen. And that's the way I tell it today. So this is how I'm going to tell my story today.

In the very beginning the Sun was the only active Being in the universe, and for some reason He kept looking down at one blue spot in the distance, a very long ways, and He kept looking at it and He kept looking at it and He said *"Something is happening down there"*. He didn't know what was happening, but He kept looking at it and then it was cloud cover. The clouds came and covered this blue spot.

He kept looking and looking and looking but there was no difference. Everything remained the same, but He sensed something was happening down there, something was trying to come alive! He didn't know what it was, but He wanted to help. So He kept looking down and He didn't realize what was going on. Although He was watchful, He didn't know what He was looking for.

And then one day there were clouds covering this blue spot in the distance, and He kept looking at it and He kept looking at it but He could not see what was going on down there. So He was vigilant, was watching what was going on, He didn't want to miss anything.

He was watching, watching all the time; He didn't know what was going on but He kept looking, and looking, and looking .... and He knew that something was going to happen but He didn't know what it was going to be. So the Sun remained vigilant watching this blue distance, blue orb in the distance.

And then while He was watching, suddenly the clouds parted and then he could see that the orb was covered with water, nothing but water. And there were huge waves that were rolling around the surface of this blue orb, so He kept looking to see what would happen.

There was nothing but waves, wave after wave, and there was nothing but ocean on the surface of this blue orb, and nothing was happening. Just the waves that kept splashing back and forth.

He didn't know what was going on, but he kept watching these waves and He knew something was happening down there, and then sometimes this sense was getting stronger and stronger, so that's why He wanted to know what was going on. And He kept looking on and looking on, and then finally an object, an object came out of this water, the waves, and it was pointed and sharp.

This object came out of the water, and now He knows something was happening and He didn't want to miss anything, so He kept looking and looking, and He said to himself, *"Now here's something that I have never seen before that is happening before my eyes."* So He kept watching and watching...

And then while He was looking, He saw somethings that were moving about this rock that jutted out of the waters. And He was looking at it, and they were stirring all around this rock. And so He kept looking and He saw that they were black ducks, and they were moving about this rock. So now He was more interested to see what was happening.

The objects that He saw that were flying through the air were three ducks. They were all black and they only had one eye and it was right in the middle of their forehead. And there was a large duck, a middle size duck and a little duck younger than the other ones.

He kept watching these ducks and they would sometimes fly in the air and land on the ocean and swim along with the waves. And sometimes they would just fly up to this rock and land there, so He knew they were something that he had not seen before.

*“The thing that I’m sensing and I don’t know what it is. I think these little beings here will know what is going on down there and they’re so close to it.”* He said, *“They’re my little brothers so I will go and enlist their help, and whatever I have to do to make things go.”*

And so He turned himself into a man, a mortal man, and when He did this, He left his right side, did not comb the right side of his hair and then he left, he combed and braided his left side.

And He got some red feathers and put them in the left side of his hair and then in the back of his head He tied a winter hawk up behind his head. And so He got himself ready.

And then He put on his leggings that were decorated in vertical colors. So He put those on and He also put on his shirt, and they were decorated with porcupine quills and they were decorated in vertical lines. And so this is how He dressed.

And so when He dressed up this way, everything was decorated with porcupine quills. They were all decorated with different colors and they were good to look at. And then He got his moccasins ready. His moccasins were made out of a wolf’s head. And so He put on his moccasins and the wolf’s tails were still sewed to the heels of his moccasins. And then He took his pipe and then got ready to do something.

And then He came down. He came slowly down and landed on this rock that was jutting out of the ocean, and He sat there and then He got his pipe out.

And then He called out to these ducks that were flying above the rock. He said, *“You are my little brothers, I want you to come towards me. I want you to come and sit with me.”*

And then the oldest duck heard Him calling, calling for him to come, but he ignored Him. He turned his back on Him and went about his own business. And then the smaller duck and the little duck heard Him calling them, so they turned and went towards Him.

*“In this whole universe, everything that we do, one of the very good things is that when the older gentleman is harried by his enemies or has a lot of work to do, then he goes about his business and then his little brothers come, come and help him. And this is one of the very fine things in life, in the whole universe.”*

*“Come sit closer to me, I have something in mind. There is something that I want to do, and I want you to help me in this undertaking.”* And then when He came, the older duck also came towards Him.

And the duck was still ignoring Him, didn’t want to talk to Him, but came towards Him, towards the Sun. And when he came, the Sun spoke to him and said, *“You know one of the great things that we do in life is that sometimes we sit down and we take out our pipes and we smoke. We smoke and talk about things, and this is the way to start anything that we want to do.”*

And the Sun said, *“When we sit down and smoke, we think about different things. We let our minds wander, and then we capture an idea. And then with that idea we talk it over, how is the best way to go about this business.”* And so He turned to the oldest duck, who said:

*“We kept thinking about you, we kept calling you. We kept asking for help, and you ignored us. And now that we are doing good we don’t need your help and now you come around and you bother us. What is the matter with you?”*

*“Yeah, here and now we don’t even think about you. (Said the ducks). “Now you are here and you want us to ask you for help, you want us to help you. It is something that you want to do.”*

And the Sun said, *“Yes, it was my fault. I should have come down earlier, but I wanted to see something happen before I came down. Now let us sit down and smoke.”*

And then He lit his pipe, and then they started to smoke and then He went through a ceremony. He pointed his pipe toward the heavens. And so after He did his ceremony, He smoked. He took a puff from his pipe and passed it around to the other ducks, and they started smoking.

*“Today I’m beginning a project. I’ve been wondering and wondering, what is down there in that blue, that blue sea? What is down there in the bottom? And what is trying to contact me?”*

*“These little beings in the bottom of the sea, they have begun something, they want to do something. They are beginning a project, but I don’t know what it is. And I need help. And when I try to help them, and they are, they are stirring themselves down in the bottom of the sea, and I think they want to come to life, they want to live!”*

Then the younger ducks both woke up, they said, *“When we go around the ocean, the sea, we noticed something is going on. We sense something, something powerful is happening down there but we don’t know what it is.”*

*“Okay, this is what I am thinking. This is what I have been thinking. The thing that we have to do, is that one of you has to go down to the bottom of the sea, and there is something down there that is soft, and dark, and I think this is what we need. I want one of you to go down.”*

*“Yeah, when you go down to the bottom, you will find something that is very soft. That I think this is what we need to make things come to life. And when you find this, this thing, I want you to bring some up, because I want to make land and I want to make these beings live!”*

*“Water, water does not hold together. It does not bring life, it dissolves and you can do nothing with it. But when you get some of this mud - that is how we can make things live. It has a lot of power, it has a life to it, and when you bring back some I will make land and I will make people and I will bring things to life!”*

*“So if we are, if we are lucky and bring back some of this mud, we will bring different things to life. And that is what we have to do.”*

So now the oldest duck spoke up and he said, *“Why, why are you determined to do this thing? I don’t feel right about it but if you want to do it I will go down and get some of this thing that you are talking about.”*

*"I have done been down there before, down in the bottom, and I have seen this thing that you are talking about. I can go down and bring back some."*

And the Sun said, *"That is good, that is all that we need."*

So He made this old duck stand before Him facing and then He went through his ceremony to ensure what they were about to do, that it would come out right.

And then when He had done with the ceremony. He said, *"this universe we don't do things without doing a ceremony. When we do things without ceremonies, they turn out wrong. And there are proper ways to do a ceremony before you start a new project."*

So He did his ceremony over the largest duck, and then He sent him down and said, *"When you go down just keep going down with your eyes closed, and when you hit bottom, when you get some of this mud, come up. And when you bring this mud I will be able to do things with it."*

And so this duck walked around and took huge gulps of air and then he walked around. And when he thought he was ready, he jumped into the sea. And when he went down they could see his webbed foot for a long time. And then it disappeared.

And then they waited and waited for the duck to come up, but he never came up. And they waited and waited some more.

*"Now I think that the oldest duck is finished, we will never see him again. He is at the bottom and now it is over for him. But one of the things that is very important in life is that when we undertake something, we try three times. And if we are not successful, we either quit or go one more time, and that is the proper thing to do."*

*"Now we cannot go past number four, so if one of you volunteered to go down and if you are not successful, then we should not attempt a fourth one. So if one of you wants to volunteer..."*

And then the middle duck was now very determined to go and get some of this mud, so he said, *"Will go down, I will go down there and get some of this mud for you."*

And so the Sun sang over him. Made him face east and sang over him and did his ceremony. But He added on things to make it more powerful.

And the same thing happened to the middle size duck. He jumped in the water, and they could see his webbed feet for a long, long time. And then he also disappeared and then they waited and waited and waited, but nothing happened.

And then after waiting a long time the duck floated to the surface, but it was no longer living. It had no more life in him anymore, and so when he came to the surface they took him to the rock.

And then when He examined the body of the duck, He found some seaweeds around his beak and in his mouth, and the Sun said, *"This is what I have been looking for. This is what I have been noticing. There are some things that are alive down there. Now, we have to go and get some mud for sure."*

*"Now we know that there are some things down there for sure. Now we have to bring some of that mud back so that we can bring life to earth."* And He said, "It's up to you little one. It's up to you to go down there and get some of this mud that we need very bad."

And so the duck said, *"I will, I will go down to get some of this mud for you, Big Brother."*

And then this duck, after He sang over him and did his ceremony, jumped in the sea. And He could see him for a long time, a long, long time and then he was also gone, disappeared in the murky waters. And now, now the Sun kept watching, and hoping, and the duck went down, down, down, and finally he hit the bottom of the sea, and grabbed some of this mud.

And then the duck went down, down and finally hit, his beak hit some of this mud. So he reached down and grabbed some in his webbed foot, and there were some on his beak. And so he went up, up, up, he kept going up and then finally he blacked out. He was unconscious.

And then when the duck floated to the top of the sea and the Sun looked down and saw him and immediately jumped in and grabbed him by his neck and pulled him onto the land. And He was checking him out, He checked everything, and He found that there was some mud on his beak and on his webbed foot.

And then He had to perform a ceremony over the duck, over the duck's lifeless body to make him come to life. And so He did the ceremony and then they helped the duck get rid of the water in his lungs. And there he sat down and he couldn't do anything for a long time. And water was coming out of his mouth and he was very weak.

*"Everything that you said is true."* (Said the Little Duck) *"The mud that we've talked about, I have seen it, I have felt it and there are some things down there that want to live. Little beings that want to come to life, and they are very anxious to start to come to life!"*

And the Little Duck said, *"I am sorry. Everything you said is down there, and there's mud and I tried to bring back some but I lost it. I dropped some, the ones that I had in my webbed foot and in my beak."*

And the Sun said, *"Wait, wait a minute, stand still!"* And He went over there and scraped his beak and there was a little mud there, a little mud in his beak. And He said, *"Well now we have some mud! We have a little mud!"* And then He looked through his webbed feet, and there was still some mud clinging to his webbed feet. So now He got these gathered together, and He said, *"Now we are ready."*

And then when He found this little piece of mud, He rolled it into a ball, and He spat on it so it would be moist. And He said, *"Now we can make some land!"*

And then He rolled his mud into a ball and He started singing his Creation Song.

And then He went up in the air and blew on this little ball of mud. And then they flew off across the ocean, across the sea and wherever they landed there was land. Tiny islets and tiny islands, all the way up to continents. And because He had very little mud, there is more water than there is land.

Now there is land all over! As far as you can see in the sea, there were tiny islands, and the bigger islands and then there were continents. So now we had land!

Then they went about the land, and looked at what they had done. And they had seen that they were on dry land. And then when they saw that they were on dry land He heard a wolf howling in the distance, to the east. And so when He heard this wolf howling in the distance, He said, *“That is the most powerful being in this Earth. It wanted to live so much that it came to life by itself, just from a little magic and creation.”*

So they heard this wolf calling, and they knew that it was the first being that came to life and it was the most powerful being on this earth. And then they heard another howling in the east, in the west, and when they listened carefully they knew it was a coyote.

*“Oh worry, now we have a male coyote!”* (Said the Sun) *“He came and when I make my children, he’ll make them do mischief. He’ll make them do bad things!”* And so He called the Little Duck towards Him, and He made him stand in front of Him.

And then He said, *“Now, now Little Duck your name from this day on will be “Shiilaape”.\* “And you will be the opposite of Old Man Coyote. Whenever he tries to make my children do bad things, you will go oppose him and set my children straight, whatever they do. I now want you to watch over them from here on out, from here on.”*

Now when they finished, when they were standing about, the wolf came towards the Old Man.\*

Then the Sun said, *“Now you are the first animal that has come to life, you are the most powerful animal on this earth. You do many great things. Now I want you to go towards the west, where the sun sets, and I want you to go out and create the things that you like. Everything that you like, you will create in the west.”* So the wolf ran off.

So now the wolf ran away.

The wolf went towards the west, and wherever he went, he created different formations of the earth. He built valleys, gullies, hills, low hills, high hills. Wherever he went, he changed everything! And he formed the land that he liked, rough land that he could run through and chase things. And then he made some mountains. He made many mountains to the west.

And then he went to make more mountains. High mountains, low mountains. All sorts of mountains. And then He became wandering around, came down and started wandering around. And the wolf said to himself, *“With all these different formations, I should make vegetation”* And so the wolf started to make all kinds of things.

And now the wolf started making forests, pine trees, cottonwood trees, all sorts of trees that he had to make. Then he made all these trees, and then when he had finished the wolf came to the low lands and

started building willows. He started creating willows for the low lands. And also he started other trees also, trees all over the land.

*“There’s nothing growing on this earth, on this ground, (Said the wolf).” I will make grass. All sorts of grass. I will make the grass that the animals can eat. Things that will help the animals grow, everything that is needed on the earth. I will make different sorts of grasses all over the plains and all over the valleys, and all over the mountains.”*

And then the wolf went so fast in creating the lands that he liked, that he missed several areas, and then they became deserts, where nothing grew. And there were arid lands all over the place. And so that is why today we have deserts.

And the wolf said, *“I’d like to run and chase things!”* He said, *“I will make animals, big animals that can run fast and evade the chase. I will make all sorts of animals, things that like to run. I will put them all over the land!”*

And then he started making animals that could run! Buffalo, elk, deer, moose, antelope, bighorn sheep, everything that could run fast. And then when he put these animals all over the land, he looked at them and said, *“Oh! There will be too many of these animals!”*

And then he started making predators: he made mountain lions, wildcats, lynx’s, all sorts of animals that like to chase animals and hunt them. And when he had finished, when he had finished with these, the wolf said, *“I should place these animals where they can chase each other and live together. And so he put all these animals in different places and made them react in different ways to certain things.”*

And when the wolf had finished, he started trotting towards the Sun, where the Sun had been. When he got there, just before he got there the Sun sent the duck to the south. And so He told the duck to create the things that he liked.

And the Sun went to the duck. The duck went to the south and started creating things.

And then the duck went south and he built high mountains, very high mountains. And then he built huge rivers and lakes and huge forests about the whole land.

And so the duck, the duck went south and started creating all kinds of birds with the forests and the trees and the mountains and the valleys and the rivers. And when he had finished, the duck looked about, and then he said, *“By creating these birds I forgot that they have to eat. I will create things that they like to eat.”*

And then the duck created all sorts of things, insects that crawled about. Everything that the birds would be able to eat. And then when he had finished, the duck looked about and he said, *“There should also be things along the rivers, and along the ponds, and along the lakes!”* So he started creating turtles and frogs and all things that live in the water, that the birds could find and eat.

And so when the duck had finished creating all these things - when he had finished - he came (back), and in the beginning there were only insects and reptiles in the south. And so then he came back to where the Sun was waiting for him, and the Sun went about the land and liked what the duck had created.

Then the Sun went to the east and started creating things that He thought that should be there. He created mountains, but very low and with a lot of trees on them. And He made many trees and they were tall trees, very tall trees, pine trees, all about the east.

And the things that He created, He did not make them very large, He made them so that very useful to people. He created small lakes and ponds, and rivers and small mountains, and valleys, wherever He went. And when He had finished, and before He came back, the wolf had finished creating in the west, after creating everything in the west, and the wolf also came back.

The Sun came back and looked about and then He looked towards the north, and He said, *“Oh we forgot to create anything that is in the north, I better go create the things that I like in the north.”*

And so the wolf ran towards the north, and started creating the things that he did in the west. And he started creating trees, and forests, and mountains and valleys and rivers and lakes. And wherever he went, he created. But before he had finished, the moment of creation had passed, the magic of creation had passed, so he did not finish. The north was unfinished.

And so when the wolf came back, he looked back at what he had created and saw that there was nothing, there had been nothing, but now there are the things he created. But there was a lot of snow, because he had not finished creating the things that he wanted. And that is why we have snow in the north all the time.

And then when (the wolf) came back, they all went about the land and saw what they had created. They created all the things that they wanted, and everything turned out right. All the animals were pleasantly eating along the land, and birds were flying about in trees, and everything seemed to be going all right. And so the Sun looked over everything and then He decided to go back.

The Sun went back up into the sky, and when He looked down He saw that everything was all right. Everything they were creating was going along just fine. But then when He checked the animals, (He said) *“All the animals look down on the ground, they never looked up, and all they do is search for food. They don’t think, they don’t see the wonders of the universe!”*

And so He said, *“We made one mistake. We have to do this one more time.”*

*“There is one more animal that we have to create, and this will be my children. We’ll make them walk firmly on the earth but be able to look up and wonder, look about the universe, and wonder about the universe, and think. I want to make these people to think about things, about everything on the earth, and everything all around them.”*

And so He went towards the Yellowstone, and their creation was very strong along the Yellowstone River. And He went towards a red mountain, and when He got to the red mountain, He got some mud together. And then by the Yellowstone River He created the first man from the mud that He took from the mountain. And then He made him, He breathed on him, and took him by the hand and made him stand up.

And then He took his son, and led him through, around the earth, and He said, *“There are many animals, there are many things that are going on and you are the one that has to watch over things. You are in charge of all these animals on the earth, and that is your job for now on. Take care of these animals.”*

And when He took this young man all around the land, and told him that he was in charge of all the animals, that he should not be afraid of anything, and he should not worry about not doing things right. And so He told him, *“You are in charge of these animals -- that is your job from now on.”*

And the man went about the earth, and he would sometimes chase the animals and sometimes chase the birds and watched over everything. And he was satisfied, he was satisfied with his position in life.

And then he started to think about things, why things are like the way they are in the universe, and why he was alone on this earth, and he started thinking too much. And then one day, he did not feel right. He, felt something went wrong with him, he couldn't tell what it was. He was not himself, so he laid down under a tree.

And the Sun was watching everything that his son was doing on the earth, and He would check on him once in a while, but his son was feeling, did not feel right, there was something wrong with them. And so he laid down under the tree and did not move. And when the Sun checked on him he could not see him. *“Where did my son go? He should be walking around.”* And then He saw him under the tree, and He said, *“There is something wrong with my son.”*

And then He kept, went searching for his son and He found him lying under a tree. And then He said, *“There's something wrong with my son, something that I did not do the right thing. There is something missing. And he knows it, and that is why he's feeling so bad.”*

*“I have made a mistake.”* He said, *“Everything I created on this earth, I made the opposite. I made the opposite of day, night and day. And then I made it cold, and I made it warm. And there is an opposite of everything that I created on the earth, but I forgot to make the opposite of my son.”*

And then the Sun said, *“The mistake I made is that I did not make a mate, the opposite of the man. I will go down and make the opposite of the man.”*

And so He made his son sleep, put him to sleep and he took one of his ribs out, and then He made the woman from the rib.

So He made the woman from the rib of the first man, and because He created the first man from the red earth, He called him Red Earth. The first man was called Red Earth. And so when he had finished, He said, *“Come, I will show you something that you need to do.”*

*“Look on the other side of this hill...”*, and He took them up on top of the hill and made them look down, and there were huge herds of buffalo that were wandering around.

And He said, *“From this day on you will depend on the buffalo. You will find your shelter, you will make your shelter and you will, it is your nourishment, and everything that you do in life you will, the buffalo will provide for you.”*

*“Everything that you need to do, you will find in the buffalo. Everything, even the clothes that you wear, you will kill the buffalo and skin him and use his hide to keep warm, to make bedding.”* And He said *“Also to tan their hides, tan hides of all the animals and use it for your clothes and ornaments and everything that you need to live.”*

And when He had finished showing the woman how to tan hides, and the man how to butcher buffalo, He said, *“Come, I will show you how to make the weapons that you need to kill the buffalo.”*

And so He took him to a rock and he shattered the rocks and made arrowheads and spear points. And He said, *"I will show you how to kill and butcher the buffalo."*

And then He said, *"I will show you what to do. And watch me and then make sure that you know how to butcher a buffalo."* He said, *"I will show you how to cut open a buffalo, kill the buffalo, cut him open, and take all the parts out. I will butcher him and I will show you what to do while I'm doing it."* And so He killed this buffalo and started butchering him. And He showed him how, what kinds of meat that they should eat right away, what part of the meat that they should preserve, what part of the meat that they should keep and how to preserve it and how to keep it. And then He had done, the Sun who had finished cutting up the buffalo, turned to the woman and He said, *"Now I will show you what to do with the buffalo, your special projects that you do with the buffalo."*

He cut the buffalo apart and showed her what kind of meat should be eaten in the wintertime, and should be eaten in the summer time, and how to cut off all the fat in the summer time, but keep all the fat for the wintertime. And when He had finished, He showed them how to cook each piece of the meat that He had cut from the buffalo. And He had said, *"Now I will show you something different."*

He spoke to the woman first; He said, *"Come, come, I will give you the gifts that you will need to survive on this earth,"* And He said, *"I will give you special gifts. In the first gift I will give you is children. I will give you the gift of children."*

*"Now I will give you the ability to cook food. You can cook all sorts of food that is on the buffalo. And I will also give you the gift of fire, you will be able to take care of the fire from here on in. And the name will be 'The One Who Follows', from now on, they will call you 'The One Who Follows'."*

And then He said, *"These are the gifts that I will give you."*

And then He drew a circle on the earth, and He said, *"I will give you the gift of shelter, you will be the one to make the shelter. And how to set it up and how to take care of it."*

And He said, *"Because I don't want you to forget, I want you to look up in the sky and you will remember what the shelter, with the tipi looks like."* So He drew a circle on the earth, and drew a tipi with smoke coming out and flowing towards the east, and then He made a woman with a child on her back sitting in front of the tipi. And then He threw it back in the sky.

*"Whatever you wonder on this earth, when you look up at the moon, you will see a tipi with smoke coming out, representing fire. And then you'll see a woman, and her baby, and when you look at the moon you will remember all these things."*

Then He turned to the woman and said, *"Now I have given you the gifts that you need to survive."*

And then He turned to the man and said, *"Now it is your turn, I will give you gifts."* He said, *"I will give you the gifts of the hunt, and of protection."* And then He broke some more rocks and made spears and arrows, and bows and hammers and awls and everything that he needed to survive. All the weapons that he needed. And then He also gave him the gift of creating, of making tools out of the buffalo.

And then it turned to evening and He told the man that he had all these gifts, he had the ability to do things, to make tools. And then He said, *"I will also give you the gift of my pipe. When I give you the pipe - you will be able to make things with it, to make plans and also to point it to the sky, and you will remember"*

*that I am in the sky and that there are many wonderful things in the sky. And this is how you will remember me.'*

*"Now I have given you the things that you need to extend contact with me, but now I will give you some physical things." He said, "I will give you your weapons that you can use to hunt the buffalo and to kill them. And then when you kill them, the woman will come and butcher them and cut the meats in certain ways that she can cook, and this is how you will survive."*

And then He turned to the man and said, *"I have given you all the things that you need to survive, but then you are mortal. You are mortal and you cannot do powerful things like I can."* He said, *"I will give you the gift of my tears."*

And when He said this the man spoke up. And then the man said *"You gave the woman the tipi, fire, children, an ability to cook. You give her good things to use in life, but you want to give me your tears. What are tears good for!"*

And then the man said, *"Tears are good for nothing!"*

And the Sun said, *"Why you ungrateful young man. Here I gave you the greatest gift that I had, the ability to do things, all sorts of powerful things that you can do with your tears. Look about you, look at the universe, everything in the universe I made with my tears. I made the world, I made the land. Everything about you I made, I even made you!"*

He said, *"You don't want it? I'll take it back!"*

*"From this day forward, I will take back that gift. But if you need it, if you want it, then there is a hard way of getting this gift back from me."*

He said, *"If you want it, you have to go to the high places, the isolated places, the lonely places. And you will go without food and water, and if there are some powerful beings in the universe that take pity on you, they will give you the gift of tears. But if not, then you will have to have a hard life."*

*"You shall walk about the land and make your teardrops fall to the ground. And when you do this, there are powerful things on this earth that will take pity on you. And if they take pity on you, then you will have this power that I take away from you. Without it, without it the things will be hard for you."*

And then when He told him these things He said, *"You have to have this, this Energy that is all about the land, and use it in a good way to help yourself. If not, you will be helpless, you will be mortal, you can't do anything powerful."*

Then He took this man and this woman and wandered all over the earth with them. He took them to the east to the ocean. And then He took them back to the west, to the ocean. And then He took them back to the north, where it was always cold. And then as they went about the land, He told them the different names for the mountains, the rivers, for the streams and the valleys.

And He said, *"You should remember all these things. When I am gone you will be able to take care of yourself. Without this knowledge you will be helpless."*

And then after he took them out about the land and showed them different things, what to do different places, how to survive in all the different places of the earth, He said, *"Now I have showed you everything."*

And now the people had growing numbers, there were many people now. And so He took them about the land and now He said, *“I have showed you how to survive. Now you should be able to get along without me. It is time for me to go home.”*

He took them to the Yellowstone River and took them down the river until they came to the Powder River, the junction of the Powder River and He said, *“Now you’ll be able to survive without me, and today I must go home. I will leave you, and I want you to live the way I showed you.”*

And then as He went up, He went up about as high as a tipi, He stopped and said, *“I will give you more gifts, special gifts that you will need to live on this earth, and not forget me.”* He said, *“When you kill the winter hawk\* take it to a high hill and sing four times and leave it there. They are my special messengers. When you do this I will know that you remember me and I will remember you.”*

*“And do the same when you kill the white buffalo, an albino buffalo, take it to a high hill, sing four times and leave it there and I will come and take it. These are my special robes that I use. And when you do this, I know that you will remember me. Now there is something else I want to tell you that you should do, so we can always communicate.”*

He said, *“When you go about the land and have enough food to eat, and everybody is happy and there is nothing wrong with the people, there is no sickness, nothing bad that has happened to the people, then make a drum. Make a drum and sing and beat the drum and dance.”*

And He said, *“This is the very things that I like, people beating the drum and singing and dancing, and when you do this I will be with you.”*

*“Now I will give you a very special gift, I will give you the gift of the sacred tobacco. In the spring when the snow starts to melt, there are spots in the mountain where they, and the coolies and in the draws the snow does not melt and when you look at them they will look like crosses in the distance, and when you go over there you will find the sacred tobacco. These are the gifts that I will give you, so that you can stay one people. And when you look up at the sky, these are the stars that have come and grew on this earth, the sacred tobacco plant.”*

*“So take this tobacco plant, and it represents everything in life that I give you. You will be able to survive if you take care of the sacred tobacco plant. Sing and dance when you hold the tobacco, and in the springtime when you plant the seeds, if they grow then you will survive. You will also grow and you will have a good life. That is why I am giving you the sacred tobacco.”*

*“I will give you the tobacco and you will use it to adopt each other, so that you will stay one people. You will stay together when you use the sacred tobacco. There will be many people, but you will also be all related by adoption in the sacred tobacco.”*

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The winter hawk was smaller than an eagle but a sometimes mistaken for it. It was spotted during the winter and then turned brown in the summer. According to Grant, it was killed as a sacrifice to the Ultimate Source of Energy in the winter – although sometimes in the spring or fall. At the time of this transcription Grant was not able to remember its name in English.

He said, *“A huge tree has many roots and many limbs, but it is only one tree, and that is what you will be like when you use the sacred tobacco. And this is how you will stay together and be a people.”*

As He went up, the fireballs flew down on the earth and wherever they landed they looked like campfires. And so, because they were sad to see the Sun leaving, they named that place Powder River from that day on. And today we still call it the Powder River.

And so when the Sun went up into the sky they missed Him very much, and they would try to follow Him in the daytimes but the Sun would set every evening and they didn't know what to do. They wanted to be near the Sun.

And then one day they said, *“Let's just keep on following the Sun. Wherever it goes in the west, we will follow it until we know where the Sun resides, and we will stay with it.”*

**(This starts THE CROW MIGRATION STORY: in Grant's telling, these two stories are closely connected and shouldn't really be separated.)**

And they went to the ocean. They came to the ocean and they didn't know how to cross. They kept looking and searching to find a way, and they found that there were tiny islands along the way. And so they built huge rafts and went from island to island until they reached the other side of the ocean and there was land.

And they kept following the sun, camp after camp, after camp, camping in certain places, and year after year, after year they followed the Sun. They kept following Him until they came to the ocean again. They came to the ocean, and when they got to the ocean they could not see land on the other side.

And then they began to wonder how they could get back to where they were created. They said, *“We don't belong here, we belong there where we were created. Let's try to find a way to get back to where we were created.”*

And there were powerful men who had Energy, and there were men that could think things about, make plans. And so they started to try to find a way, and somehow they found a way to try to cross the ocean. And there were many people now, there were many, many, many more people, and so they decided to cross the ocean.

And they decided to leave. They wanted to go back to their homeland where they could, where the living was easy, where life was good and they wanted to go back. But then many of the people did not want to go, they said they want to stay so they devised a way to go across the ocean, and then they left.

And shortly after they left, many turned back. And then along the way many were drowned also. So many people were lost on the way, but they kept going and going and finally reached the eastern shore of the United States again.

So they crossed the ocean and when they got to the eastern shore of the United States they grew in numbers again, there were many people and they depended on the buffalo. And so there were many buffalo there that they used to survive.

And so they survived for a long time and then the buffalo disappeared. There were no buffalo, so they were frantic to find some buffalo. And they picked 13 men, 13 strong men to go looking for, search for the buffalo.

And so they went towards the west, where the Sun sets.

And so they went towards the west and for a long time they could not find anything. And a few of them, some of the men went to the Yellowstone River and there they found buffalo in huge numbers. Their valleys were full of buffalo, and so they killed some, dried some of the meat and packed it on their backs and started to look for their home again.

And when the men returned, they took the meat back and they said, *“There are buffalo in large numbers in that mythical place we call the Yellowstone River, the Elk River. The Elk River. And I think we should go back and start to live there again, because that’s where we were created. And there are a lot of buffalo on the Elk River.”*

And so they went back to the Yellowstone River and stayed there for a long time, the Elk River. And they stayed there for a long time. And things went fine again, their numbers grew and there were a lot of people that lived together and were happy.

But then one day, the sun started to dry out the earth. The sun got too hot and things did not grow, and the Yellowstone River became like a desert. And it was an arid place. So they had decided to go north to see what was up there.

And when some people went to the north they found that it was not dry, it was a fine place to live. So they migrated to the north, to live there.

And they went up North and lived there for a long time in this, in this marshy place and they ran into some animals, huge animals that lived there and they would sometimes come out of the marshes. And so they learned to live up in the mountains, they lived in the mountains, and they would come and kill some of these people (theses creatures). And so they learned to cope with these animals, and they called them “long otters”\*.

After they lived there for a long time, they learned how to survive with these animals, and they learned how to kill them, and our stories, we have stories about them killing these animals and finally destroying all of them.

And so after this happened, the population grew. There were so many people that they had different clans. They lived within clan systems. And whenever they moved they had this crooked staff that one of the people took and led the other people.

And so this is how they moved about the land, and they used this crooked staff.

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\*Long otters = According to Grant the “long otters” were what we would call a form of dinosaur that lived in marshy areas. Grant has also shared with us dinosaur lullabies and other stories of the Crow and dinosaurs. “Long Otter” was also the name of a famous Crow warrior who fought in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, he killed Sitting Bull’s father in the Owl Creek Mountains of Wyoming. Long Otter the warrior got his Energy or power from these dangerous creatures.

And so they used this crooked staff to move about the land and only the leaders could handle this crooked staff, probably like a shepherd's, that you always see in photographs. And so one day one of the clans, one of the larger clans, the Rib Men\* just decided not to give up the crooked staff, they wanted to be the leaders of the whole tribe.

And so there was a big battle because the Rib Men did not want to give up the staff. And so that was the first battle that the Crows ever fought, it was between themselves. And all the other Crows joined in and they defeated the Rib Men and so the Crow fled south again. They went towards the Knife River\*, along the Missouri River.

And when the Crow fled to the south the older people said, *"We should be one people again. Let us go back and talk to them and become friends again. And we will be, stay one people."* So they moved south.

The whole tribe moved south until they came to the Hidatsa and the Arikaras. And so when they got there the Rib Men were living with Arikaras and Hidatsa. So the Crow went further, they didn't want anything to do with the Rib Men who were living among the Arikaras and Hidatsa. The Crows went south.

But when they got to the where the Arikara and the Hidatsa lived, the Crow kept moving south and so the other people, the Rib Men, stayed there with the Arikara and the Hidatsa. And because of these animals, the long otters, that they ran into, there were many women that had no husbands, no husbands, and so they intermarried with the Arikara and the Hidatsa.

And so because of the intermarriage the people stayed with the Arikara and the Hidatsa and these women became the Mandan. And because of the intermarriage, the Crows were the dominant peoples. They still spoke their language, but with an accent like the Hidatsa and Arikara who had kind of a rough way of talking\*. So now they became the Mandan people.

And then the Crow people and the Hidatsa parted company. The Crow people, who were a small band then, liked to travel every day, to see what was over the next horizon. The Arikara were and Hidatsa were more sedentary and lived in one place in earth lodges. The Crow kept moving on towards the west, along the Elk River. And so they left the Rib Men there and they (the Rib Man) became another tribe, the distant cousins of the Crow people.

And then they kept traveling and then they said, *"Let's go, let's go to where the ocean is in the west, and see how it is to survive on that land."* And so they went towards the west. And when they got to the ocean, they stayed there for quite a while.

\*The Knife River in present day North Dakota

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\*The Rib Men are the Kiowa who did not want to give up the leadership of the Crow bands. According to Grant, the Crow and the Kiowa were together at this time. Leadership was supposed to change every year so this caused an irreparable rift.

\*"Rough way of talking" Grant is referring here to the guttural sounds of the Arikara and Hidatsa language.

And then one day something tremendous happened to these people, something, maybe a volcano eruption, tsunami, earthquake, something had happened that scared them so bad that they fled back to the east towards the Yellowstone River.

But this act of nature, this powerful, violent, whatever it is happened, they were so scared they left their children who were playing, that they could not get a hold of them, so they left them there and they ran, went back to the Elk River.

And then one day when things calmed down and things went back to normal again, they decided to look for their children. They went to the west, to look for their children.

And when they went back to where they fled from their camp, they left all their tipis and belongings behind. So when the children came back they started to live in these tipis, and the older children married and adopted the little ones, and they became a tribe. When they got back, they were a different people.

And when the tribe found the children, they greeted each other and they found out that they were doing all right. And so then they decided to go back to the Elk River, but the children refused. They said, *“You left us here, you abandoned us here, now this is our home we are going to stay here.”*

And so they became a different tribe and they called themselves the Nez Perce, the “Pierced Ears”.\*

And so the Crow tribe came back and they wandered about, they wanted to see all the different places that they lived in. So they would go into Canada, go all the way to the east across the Mississippi, and then they would go down south as far as they could, to the south, and then they would wander back to where they lived.

And they called themselves the “Tipi Ring People” at this time. They had regular tipis but they would put rocks all around the tipis for spiritual protection, and so these tipi rings are still about the land. They kept this name (*“akbiaakashuupe”*) for a long time because they moved every day at that time until they became too numerous to move every day.

And then they lived together peacefully for a long time and they wandered about the land. And then one day there was a rebellious group that wanted to go live towards the south and the east, and they wanted to become farmers. And so without a fight or without an argument, they left. And they called them *“iiuuchaa”* which today we use for ‘rebellious people’. A band of Crow that became the Sac and Fox.

And so they lived about the land for a long time, and wandered fearlessly about the land because they had no enemies. And they visited the Mandan. And so they stayed one tribe, they spoke one language and they practiced everything except that they did not live in earth lodges. And so they still had friendly relations with each other and traded with each other, and so the Crow tribe remained. They were the only people who moved from Canada to Texas, and from Missouri to the Pacific. They were the only people there for a long time.

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According to Grant the Crow word for nose and ear are very close and the French interpreter mistranslated the name of these people; “hole in their ear” is “abuupaa” - hole in the nose is “abpuupaa”.

And so the people had separated in the wintertime. A band called the Southern River Crows, which go as far as the Dusty River, which is the Rio Grande in Texas, and then they would live there in the winter time and come back north in the summer time. And then another group who called themselves the Upper River Crows, lived from Denver, Colorado all the way to the Big Horn River. And so that's where they lived. And then there was another group called the Southern Band, which lived along the Wind River Mountains, between the Big Horn Mountains and the Wind River Mountains, and that whole area there.

And then there was another group that lived along the Judith Basin, along the Missouri River and between the Elk River and the Missouri River. And they called themselves the Many Lodges.

And then they lived for a long time separated from each other, and there was another group that called themselves the Black Lodges, which were on the Little Rockies and along the Missouri River and all into Canada. And so these were the different groups of the Crow people or the *Apsaalooke* people. And so they all lived separate for a long time until the other people started coming in; the settlers and the traders and the trappers, and the other tribes, the Sioux, the Cheyenne and the other tribes that came later. And so when this happened though Crows lived closer together, closer together, north, around the Big Horn Mountains.

And when the other people came, inter-warfare started, and the Southern River Crows fought the most, they would fight everybody that came into the area. And in the springtime, they would come north and join the Southern Band and the Wind River hand then they would go up north to the Judith Basin, to the Many Lodges. And then they would fight the enemy there, and then they would go to the Black Lodges and fight their enemies in that area. And then in late fall they would go back to Texas or wherever they lived.

And so there was tremendous warfare at this time, when the other tribes and the settlers started coming in.

That is all of the way we lived, and then we started slowly moving together and stay and became one tribe because of the influx of people into our land. And we could not protect the whole land, so they stayed together to try to fight off the other tribes, and so we still retain a large portion of our land, but we lost a lot of land that we wandered in. And today we're still at the center of our base, close to the Yellowstone River, or the Elk River.

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Notes from our recording session: more on long otters and other details of the stories

Sharon Kahin: Can you tell us a little bit more about the long otters? What kind of creatures were these?

Grant: I believe they're dinosaurs. You know, probably left over, they didn't all die, some of them probably survived when they were in Canada. And then they slowly killed them off. They would find them, except their brains are so small that they don't sleep in until, you know, the sleep overtakes them and then they're unconscious when they sleep.

John Mionczynski: They're unconscious when they sleep?

Grant: Yeah.

Sharon: And so you are saying that the dinosaurs were unconscious when they slept?

Grant: Yeah, they would come upon them and they would throw anything that would burn on them, burn them alive. And then the other way is to lead them up a mountain and throw hot rocks in their mouth because their legs are so small they can't catch them. And they would try to bite them but they would throw hot rocks in their mouth and the pour hot water down their throat. So they slowly killed them off, I guess.

Sharon: I noticed in the Throssel photographs there was a man called Long Otter. Is that a direct translation?

Grant: Uh-huh. Yeah, see we can remember all these stories, and remember, you know, all these things up until the present time. The long otters, they were one of the hardest things to overcome, I guess.

John: How big were they?

Grant: Well, according to some of the stories, they killed one of them on top of the mountain, the mountain that Yellowstone River, Yellowstone Lake, they fell off the mountain and when it, the water had splashed the size of the mountain, it was a huge animal.

John: Very big.

Sharon: And was "*Buuluuksaa*" (Crow for "water monster" according to Grant this name is so old no one remembers the exact translation) just one of the long otters, or was that different?

Grant: They were probably left over from ancient days, yeah. Because there were very few of them.

Sharon: The red mountain by the Yellowstone River, is that a recognizable place?

Grant: There is a red mountain by Yellowstone Lake, right by Yellowstone Lake.

Sharon: By Yellowstone Lake?

Grant: Yeah.

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Sharon: Winter hawk, you said that the Sun left them a winter hawk?

Grant: No, that's one of His messengers.

Sharon: Winter Hawk.

Grant: Yeah.

Sharon: What is a winter hawk?

Grant: Well it's a chicken hawk. In the winter time it changes color. It looks like an eagle in the wintertime.

Sharon: Okay. So that's one of the Sun's messengers?

Grant: Uh-huh.

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Sharon: I remember you telling us that Nez Perce was a mistranslation.

Grant: Uh-huh.

Sharon: What is the Crow name again for the Nez Perce?

Grant: Uh, let's see, "holes in their earlobes."

Sharon: "Holes in the earlobes?"

Grant: Yeah. And in our language it's so close, "abpuupaa" meaning "nose" and "abuupaa" meaning "ears", so it was a mistake somebody made, somebody made a mistake somewhere.

Sharon: Somebody made a mistake.

Grant: Yeah, just the translation.

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Sharon: The Rib Men, who were the Rib Men?

Grant: The Kiowas.

Sharon: So the Kiowas and the Crow were related?

Grant: Yeah, they were one people at one time.

Sharon: So is that why the Kiowa Creation Story also takes place in Yellowstone? (YNP at the Dragon's Mouth)

Grant: Mm-hmm.

Sharon: And why did they call them the Rib Men ?

Grant: Probably because they ate ribs more than anything else. I don't know, I'm not sure but that's what they called them.

Sharon: And how do you spell it?

Grant: D-O-O-Z-B-A-J-A-A.

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Sharon: The crooked staff, we have a picture of one that we'll ask you to identify later. It's really huge, it's really tall. How did that function? Did it have a spiritual function?

Grant: Well I guess in the old days it represented the leadership. Leadership that they are compelled to follow the crooked staff wherever it went.

Sharon: Did it have power in any way similar, for example, to the Rod of Aaron in the Old Testament?

Grant: It was similar.

Sharon: Similar?

Grant: Yeah... whoever had it would go where there were no dangers in life, no sickness, no sickness, so if they did not follow it may be something bad would happen to them.

Sharon: So the rod, so the staff itself had power to lead them?

Grant: Mm-hmm.

Sharon: Did you ever know anyone who knew about that power?

Grant: No, I'd, the Oklahoma Indians still use it a lot in their ceremonies, but we don't. We don't do that anymore. So they took the staff and they kept it over there, I guess.

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John: The Black, the Black Lodges - that was one of the groups?

Grant: Mm-hmm, yeah.

John: Were they the ones that the Nez Perce ran into before the Battle of Bear Paw?

Grant: No, well there was another group, I think that they that broke away from the (??), the (??) And maybe two hundred years ago they called themselves Kicked in the Bellies.

John: Oh the Kicked in the Bellies?

Grant: Yeah, you never heard about them until recently, so –

John: But they are the ones who refused to help the Nez Perce?

Grant: Yeah, yeah they are the ones.

John: Okay.

Sharon: So they were the same, the Black Lodges and the Kicked in the Bellies?

Grant: No, no, they're different... Yeah, Kicked in the Bellies, I guess they wandered around the Yellowstone and the Big Horn, but they have a history of migrating from the (??), so they think that that's the whole tribe, but that's only the Kicked in the Bellies that migrated because of the sacred tobacco, they were looking for it. So these are the stories that (??) picked up, and now that's what they go by.

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John: You said the language got rough, could you explain what that was?

Grant: They, you know like, brogue, you know they speak with a broke, kind of rough brogue –

John: You mean sounds rough?

Grant: Yeah, that's the only way I can explain it there. They speak language, I heard them in the old days, you know when I was a boy, they speak just like we do, but they're that (??), like that.

John: Oh okay. Kind of like a Brooklyn accent.

Grant: Yeah, even the women, even the women.

John: Even the women?

Grant: Yeah.

John: So modern Crow language is partially that sound compared to the ancient language?

Grant: Well, I think we completely lost the old language, you know, it's just, English. We speak English phrases, we speak Crow. We speak Crow words but we say it in English, say it the way we'd say it in English.

John: Oh.

Grant: Yeah, we lost a lot. Not a lot of people can speak and tell stories at the same time, they'd say it to, broken with English and Crow and it's not there anymore.

John: Huh. You mean the inflection and the accent?

Grant: Yeah.

John: The way you accent a sentence would be different?

Grant: Yeah.

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Sharon: You said the long otters were in the marshes, so they were mostly a lowland kind of...

Grant: Yeah, that's how they described them, coming out of the marshes.

John: Now was that before your people ran into any other people, any other tribes?

Grant: They never ran into any other people in all their wanderings.

John: Where did the other people come from?

Grant: I don't know, as soon as they found out that we lived in a good place, they all came.

John: They all had to come over here? (laughs)