

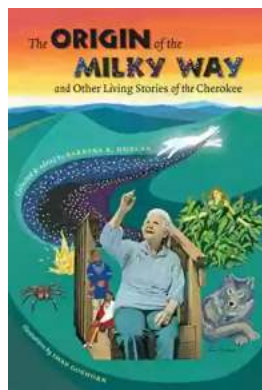
# The Origin Of The Milky Way And Other Living Stories Of The Cherokee

Have you ever wondered about the beautiful cosmic phenomenon known as the Milky Way? The Cherokee people have their own mesmerizing tale to explain its origins, along with a treasure trove of other captivating stories that provide a glimpse into their rich and vibrant culture.

The Cherokee Nation, a Native American tribe indigenous to the southeastern United States, has a long tradition of storytelling. These stories, passed down through generations, serve to teach morals, preserve history, and entertain listeners with their vivid imagery. One such story is the mesmerizing tale of the origin of the Milky Way.

## The Origin Of The Milky Way

According to Cherokee legend, long ago, there was a beautiful young woman who lived among the Cherokee people. This young woman possessed great healing powers and was deeply respected by her tribe. She was known as "Selu," meaning corn in Cherokee.



## The Origin of the Milky Way and Other Living Stories of the Cherokee by Barbara R. Duncan (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1935 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 140 pages



One day, Selu discovered a mysterious cosmic visitor, a fallen star, in a field near her home. Being a compassionate soul, she nurtured the fallen star back to health. Over time, the star began to transform into a handsome young man.

Upon seeing the enchanting young man, Selu fell deeply in love with him. They married, and their union brought joy and happiness to the entire Cherokee Nation. Selu soon discovered that she was pregnant with the young man's child.

However, their story took a tragic turn when Selu fell gravely ill while pregnant. Sensing her impending demise, she summoned her husband and instructed him on what to do after her passing.

She told him, "When the time comes, bury me in the cornfield. Soon, a bountiful harvest will grow from my body to ensure the survival of our people."

Devastated by her imminent death, the young man respectfully followed her wishes after she passed away. He buried her body in the field, and true to her words, a miraculous transformation occurred.

From Selu's body emerged a tall, sturdy cornstalk representing sustenance for the Cherokee people. As the cornstalk grew, it reached for the heavens, eventually becoming entangled with other nearby celestial bodies. The Cherokees believed that the stars in the sky were Selu's children, born from her union with the fallen star.

Witnessing this extraordinary union, the Cherokee people immortalized the tale by naming the celestial formation "Gili," meaning the "Milky Way." To this day, the

Milky Way serves as a reminder of Selu's selfless sacrifice and the importance of corn in Cherokee culture.

## **Living Stories of the Cherokee**

While the origin of the Milky Way is a captivating story, it barely scratches the surface of the extensive collection of living stories that the Cherokee people possess. These stories cover a wide range of topics, including creation myths, animal fables, and tales of mythical figures.

One such prominent figure in Cherokee storytelling is "Unetlanvhi," the Great Creator. According to Cherokee belief, Unetlanvhi brought order and harmony to the world through his creation. His guidance and presence continue to shape the Cherokee way of life.

Another popular Cherokee story revolves around the mysterious "Little People." Believed to be benevolent spirits who reside in the mountains and forests, the Little People are known for their mischievous behavior and their ability to provide assistance when needed. Many Cherokee individuals claim to have had personal encounters with these enigmatic beings.

Moreover, the Cherokee people also tell tales of various animals with unique characteristics and abilities. These animal fables serve as cautionary tales, teaching valuable life lessons and emphasizing the importance of respecting and living in harmony with nature.

From the courageous rabbit who outsmarts larger animals to the cunning coyote who always manages to find food, these animal stories continue to entertain and educate young Cherokee individuals.

## **Preserving Cherokee Culture Through Stories**

For the Cherokee people, storytelling has always been a vital tool for the preservation and continuation of their cultural heritage. By recounting these stories, they ensure that their traditions, values, and history are passed down to future generations.

Stories are shared during tribal gatherings, family events, and mentorship sessions. They are not only a means of entertainment but also a way for Cherokee children to learn important life lessons and develop a strong connection to their roots.

Unfortunately, with the passage of time, several Cherokee stories have been lost. Factors such as colonization, forced assimilation, and the relocation of tribes have led to a decline in the transmission of these tales.

However, efforts are underway to revive and document these stories. Organizations and individuals dedicated to preserving Cherokee culture are working tirelessly to collect and record oral narratives before they disappear completely.

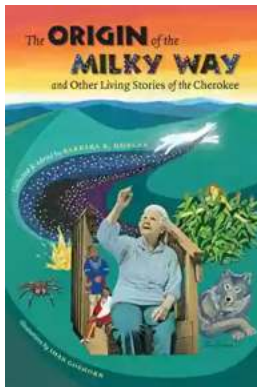
These initiatives are crucial in ensuring that the Cherokee people's living stories continue to resonate with future generations and provide a deeper understanding of their culture.

The Origin of the Milky Way and other living stories of the Cherokee offer a fascinating glimpse into the vibrant and rich cultural heritage of this Native American tribe. Passed down through generations, these stories serve as a window into their past, conveying cherished values, morals, and historical events.

From the selfless sacrifice of Selu to the mischievous Little People and the wise teachings of animal fables, each story holds immense significance in preserving

Cherokee culture.

By reviving and sharing these stories, the Cherokee people ensure that their traditions remain alive and continue to inspire and educate future generations about their glorious past.



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Cherokee people have lived in the Great Smoky Mountains for thousands of years. During all this time, they have told stories to each other to explain how things came to be, to pass on lessons about life, and to describe the mountains, animals, plants, and spirits around them. The Origin of the Milky Way and Other Living Stories of the Cherokee collects 27 stories that are great for kids and are still being told by storytellers today.

Presented by members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in their own words, the stories appear in free-verse form, like poems on the page, so that if you read them aloud, you can hear the rhythm of the stories as they were originally told. Barbara R. Duncan provides a helpful that describes Cherokee people's past and present ways of life and their storytelling traditions. The book

also includes a glossary of key words from the stories, suggestions for further reading, and notes on the storytellers. For young readers, for parents to read aloud to young listeners, and for teachers and libraries, *The Origin of the Milky Way* provides an excellent to Cherokee culture. (For readers age 9 and up.)

Storytellers:

Davy Arch

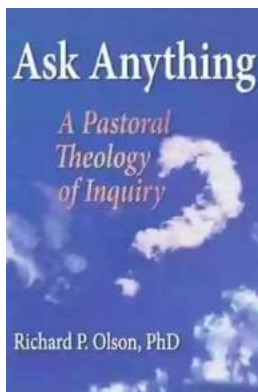
Robert Bushyhead

Edna Chekelelee

Marie Junaluska

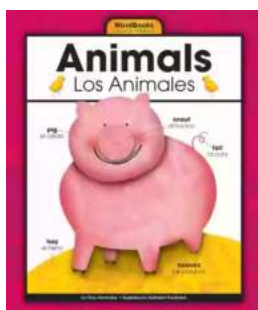
Kathi Littlejohn

Freeman Owle



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