



Father Sky and Mother Earth

A Navajo Legend

Cultural Note

To the Navajo, Father Sky and Mother Earth, who represent male and female, equally provide all that is needed to live and prosper on earth. Many Navajo ceremonies, prayers, and songs are based on maintaining balance and harmony between Father Sky and Mother Earth.

Vocabulary

abundance

boasted

compromise

monstrous

petrified forest

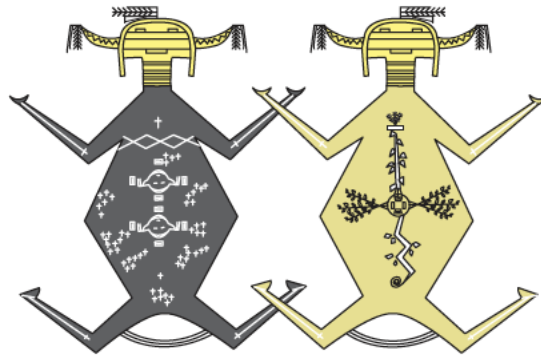
stamina

The Native American Indian Literacy Project was made possible by funds from the Utah State Office of Education (USOE). It is a joint effort of the USOE and San Juan School District Media Center. For more information about this project, contact Shirlee Silversmith at (801) 538-7838.

The booklets are available on a CD from the USOE. You may print the booklets off the CD, free of charge, for educational purposes. If you would like to purchase printed copies of the booklets, contact San Juan School District Media Center at (435) 678-1229.

Father Sky and Mother Earth

A Navajo Legend



Story told by
Don Mose, Jr.

Illustrated by
Molly Trainor

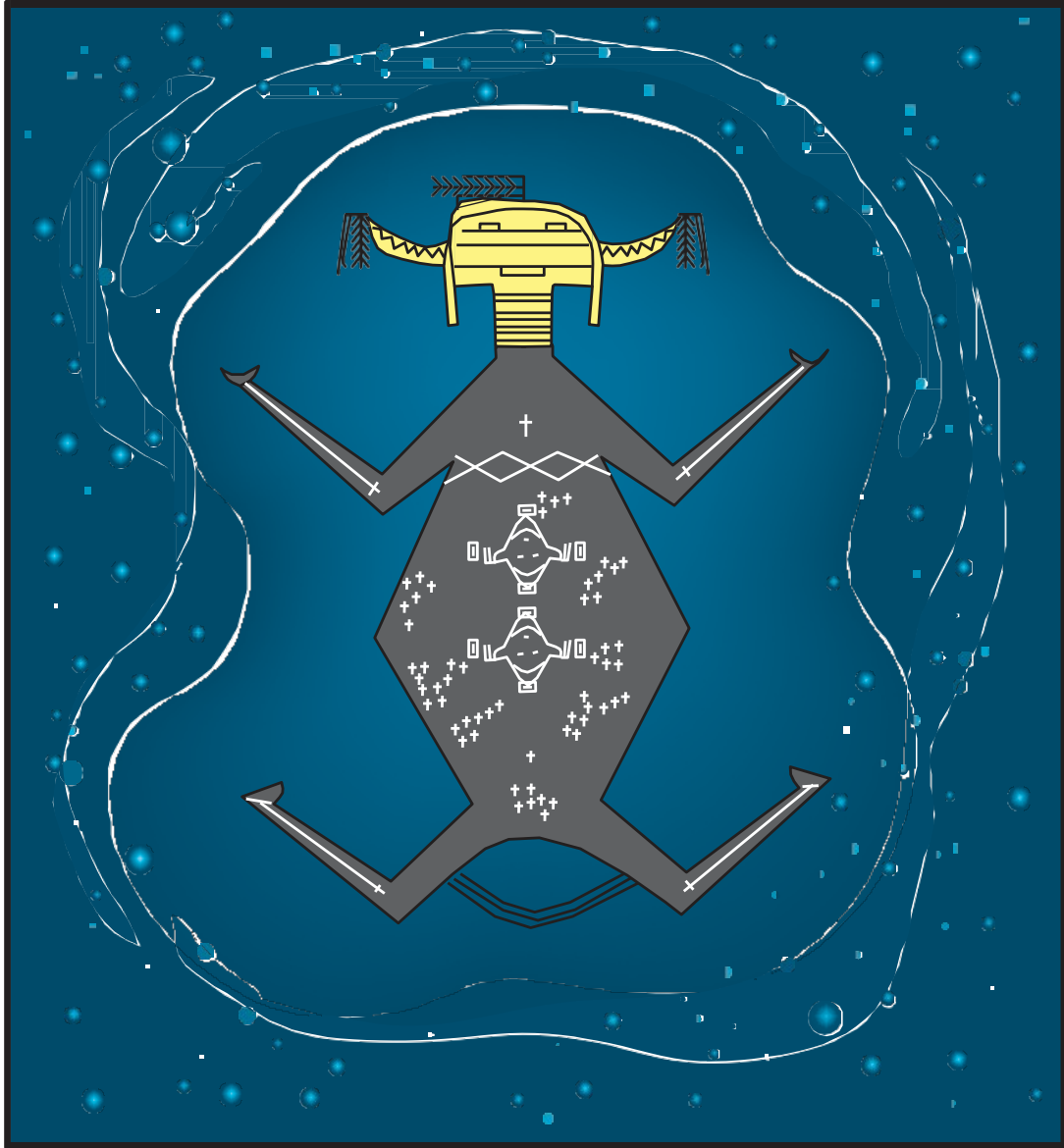
Based on sketches by
Don Mose, Jr

Cultural Consultants
Clayton Long
Brenda Whitehorse

Editing and layout by
Kathryn Hurst



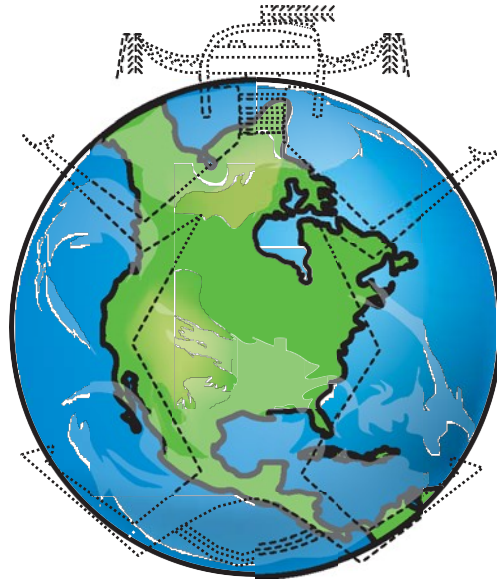
In the beginning the Holy People created Father Sky and Mother Earth in perfect harmony and balance. Male and female worked together to create the beautiful world. From Father Sky, the sun shined brightly, and rain fell abundantly to Mother Earth. She was nourished and energized, and all the earthly creations flourished. The seasons were in perfect order, and everything worked together as the Holy People had planned.



Father Sky was proud of his universe. From a clear blue sky, the powerful sun warmed the earth in the daytime. At night the moon and stars provided light so Mother Earth would never be in complete darkness.

Mother Earth was beautiful. Everything flourished and grew large. The majestic mountains met the clouds in the sky. The trees grew tall, and plants of every kind and color grew in abundance. Streams and rivers flowed crystal clear with sweet water, and the animals were monstrous on the ground and in the skies.





Then one day Mother Earth became proud. She boasted, “Everything here belongs to me. Everything that walks, crawls or flies is under my control. Because of me, they are beautiful.”

Father Sky did not like what he heard. He replied, “You’re only beautiful because of me. Anything that walks, crawls or flies only exists because of my energy.”

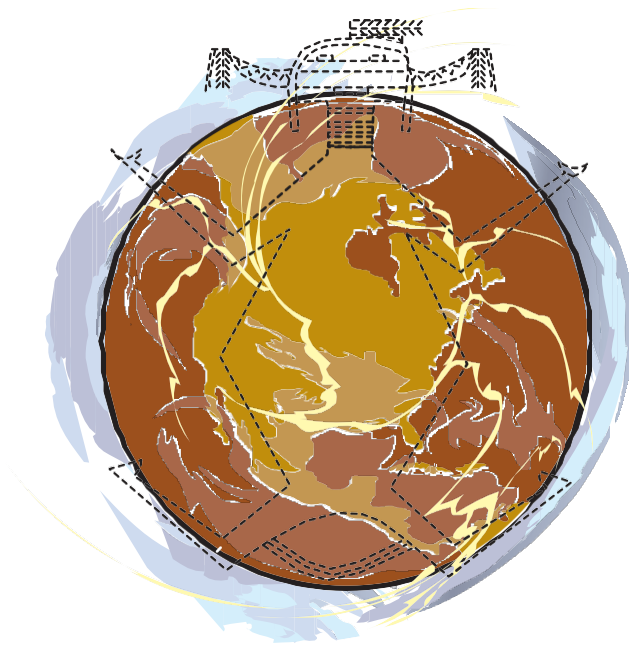
“Oh no,” said Mother Earth. “I control everything on earth. Everything here exists because of me. You’re way up there, far away. How can you have anything to do with what happens here on earth?”

Then Father Sky said, “Fine. You be in charge of the earth, and I’ll be in charge of the sky. We won’t work together any more.”

This was the first big argument between male and female, and they decided that they would go their separate ways and have nothing to do with one another.

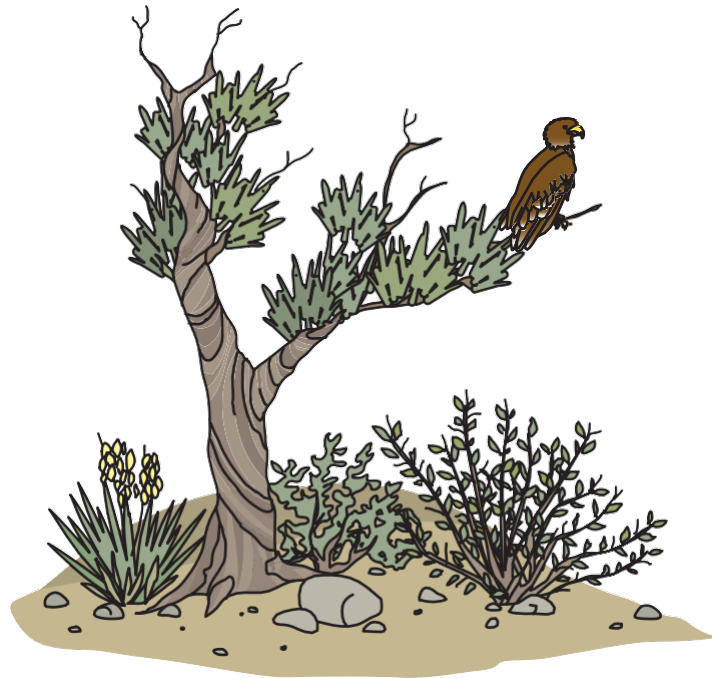
Father Sky was angry. Many stars fell to earth or shot through the air as meteors. The air became thin. Lightning and thunder were everywhere, but rain never reached the earth. The seasons changed.

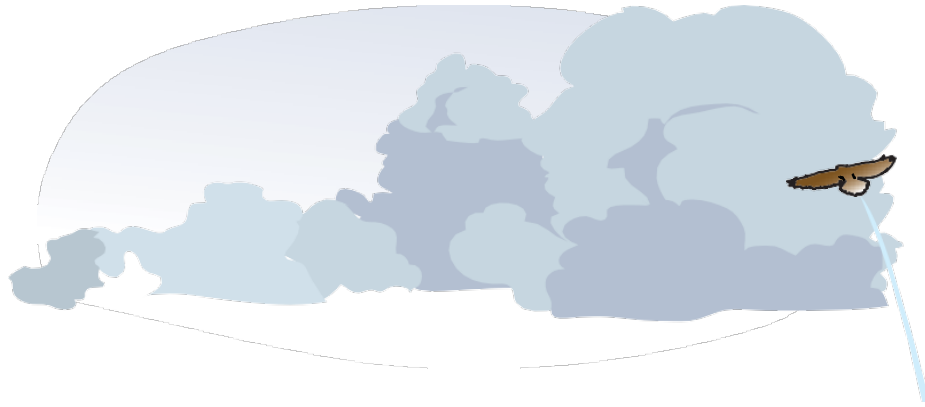
As the days, seasons, and years went by, Mother Earth changed. Mountains erupted into volcanoes and hot lava flowed through the once beautiful valleys. The trees became petrified forests, and the crystal clear water turned salty and poisonous. The vegetation disappeared, and the huge animals in the sky and on the earth died off



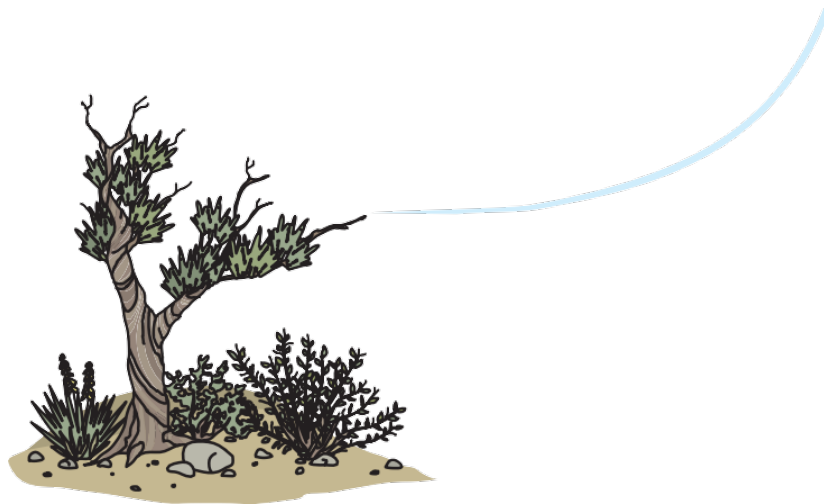
After four years, only four plants and a bird were left on earth. Somehow they had managed to survive, despite the lack of moisture and the thin air. It was time for the Holy People to come to the rescue. Twelve of them got together with the survivors to talk about what must be done. They said, “We don’t like what’s happening here. We’ve got to get Father Sky and Mother Earth to work together again. The land is ruined, and our creations are an ugly sight.”

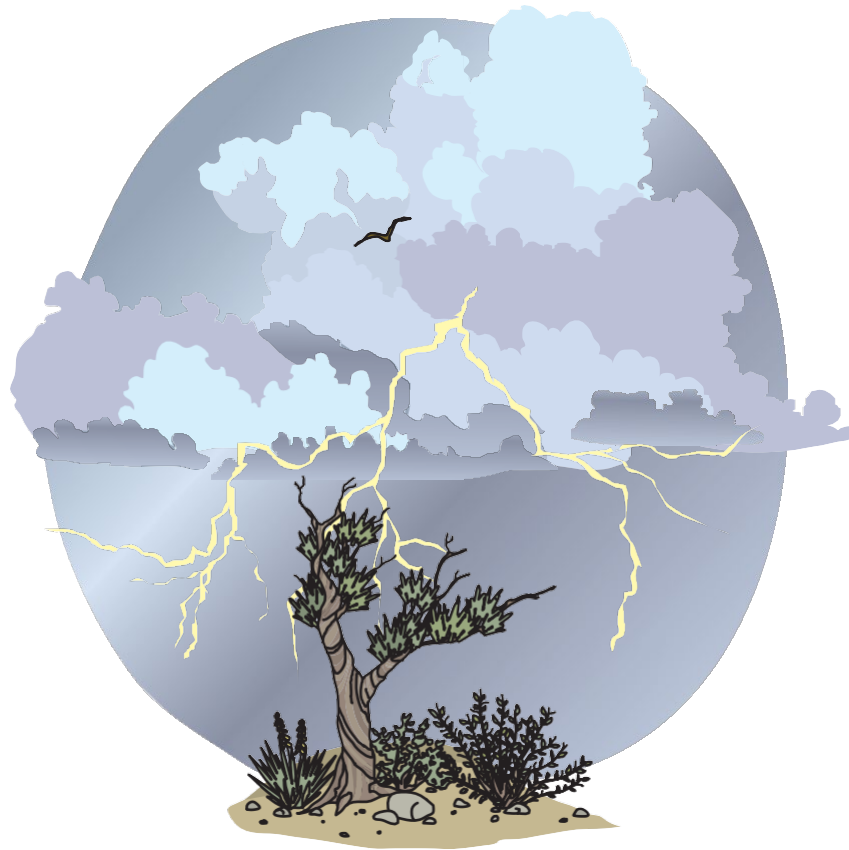
This is when the four plants spoke. They went to Mother Earth and told her, “Because you cannot get along with Father Sky, we have suffered. You are losing your beauty as well. Please, come to an agreement and restore harmony between earth and sky.”





Mother Earth thought about what the plants were saying, and she realized that the argument had to end. “You’re right,” she said. “This has gone on long enough. I was wrong when I thought I could do this all by myself. I will send a message to Father Sky and apologize to him for what I said. We will compromise.” She sent the only bird left with a message to Father Sky. He flew up and up and up until he disappeared into the clouds.

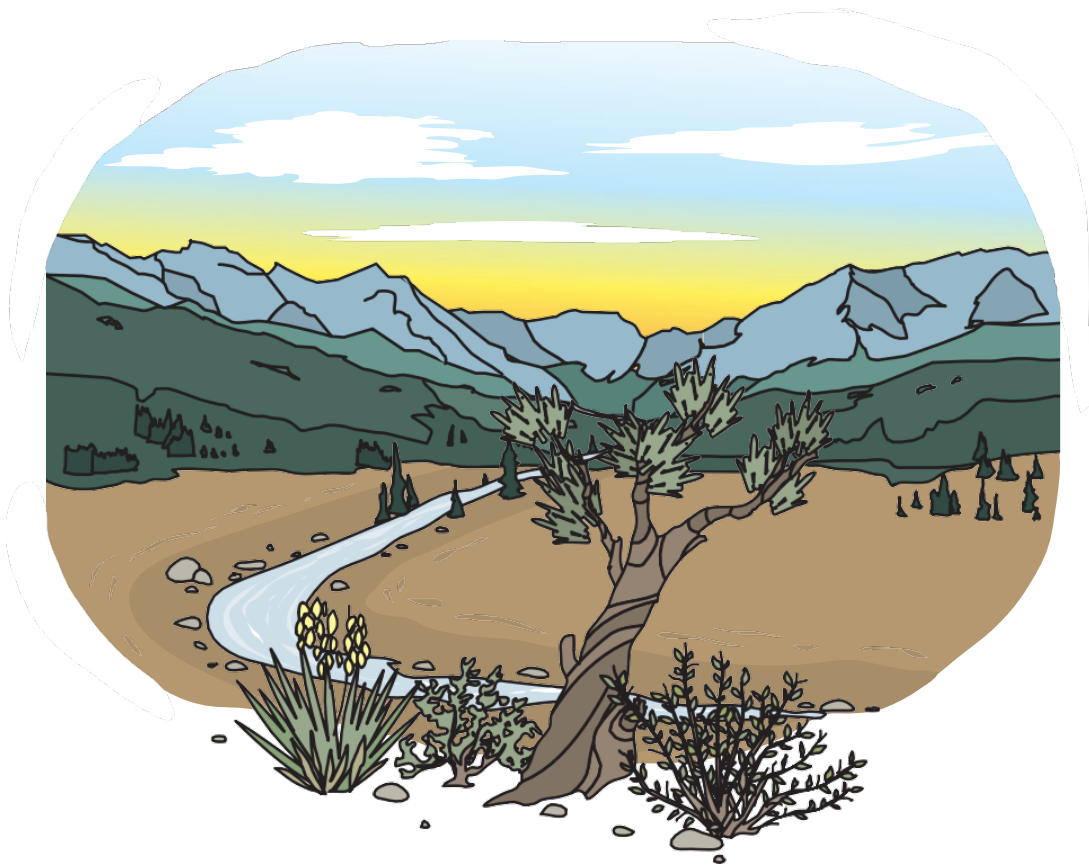


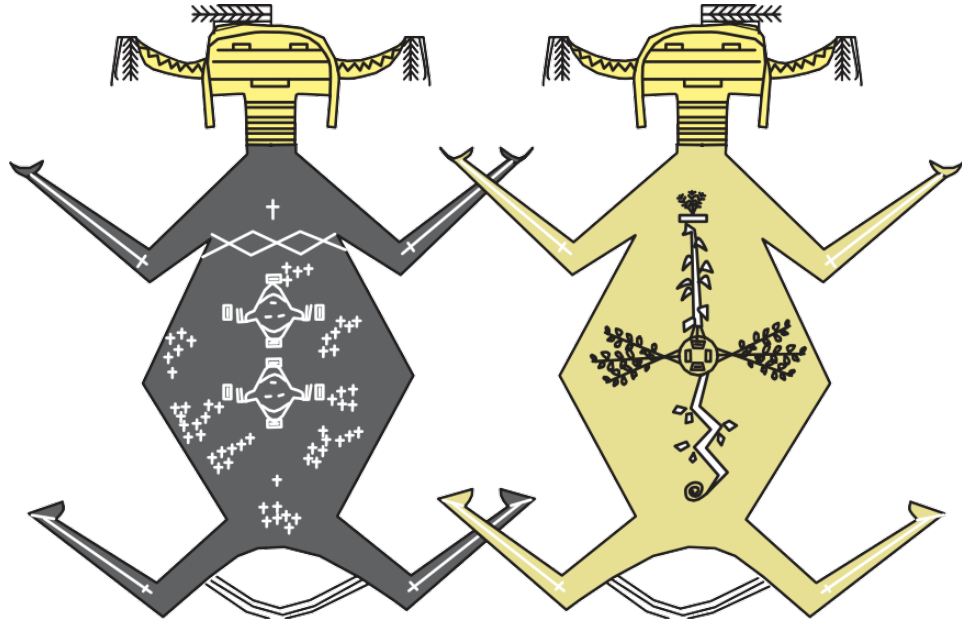


Mother Earth, the Holy People, and the four plants waited for the bird to return with a message from Father Sky. Finally, after four days, they saw rain clouds appearing in the south, and they heard thunder. The next day the thunder came closer. On the third day, the clouds were darker and they were almost above the survivors. On the fourth day, lightning struck. Out of the clouds and lightning flew the bird, back down to earth. With him he brought the answer from Father Sky: rain and the smell of fresh air.

Mother Earth began to come back to life. The moisture restored life and energy, and the plants and creatures reappeared.

The cedar tree, tobacco, yucca, and sage were the four plants who had survived the ordeal, and the bird who took the message to Father Sky was the great eagle. The Holy People, Mother Earth, and Father Sky told the survivors, “Because of your courage and stamina, you will be used in ceremonies by many people.”





From that day on, the differences between Mother Earth and Father Sky were settled. Both male and female rain fall from the sky. Mountains and rivers are male and female. Plants are male and female. And of course, the animals and birds are both male and female. Everything on earth and in the heavens is equal, and they work together.

That is why the Diné say “Hózhó náhásdíí” at the end of every ceremony.

Beauty had come again.

Glossary

Diné - Navajo people

Hózhó náhásdíí' - Beauty has come again

náldsá - rain

nahasdzáán - earth

yá - sky

Reading Suggestions

- Use comprehension strategies, such as questioning and summarizing, to better understand the text.
- Go outside and look at the stars with binoculars or a telescope. Identify all the constellations you can.
- Visit www.nasa.gov on the Internet. Search for related web sites.

2006

Produced by

Utah State Office of Education and
San Juan School District Media Center

For more information, visit www.schools.utah.gov/curr/indianed.

To purchase copies, call 435-678-1229.