

Ma'ii Joodloshí

Trotting Coyote



Coyote, or Ma'ii, is an important character in the creation stories of the Diné. Because of his many good and evil deeds, he is known by several names: Yikáah Dilwoshí, Howling to the Universe; Haiikááh Ndiilghááshí, Howling in the Morning; Dooldiní, Annoying or Bothersome One; Ma'ii Joodloshí, Trotting Coyote; and just plain Ma'ii, which is often used to mean "shoo" or "go away," like one would shout at an unwanted dog. Coyote the trickster is both good and evil. Cunning and confusing, he refers to everyone as his "cousin," animals and humans alike. At times he is even portrayed as one of the Holy People. He is a troublemaker who always wants what someone else has, but never wants to work for it. Many of our human weaknesses come from Coyote. Each winter we tell our children Coyote stories

so they can learn lessons from his mistakes and misadventures and avoid those pitfalls in their own lives. The legends don't tell us how Coyote himself came to be, but during the flood he helped bring people into this world. He did it, however, by stealing Water Monster's babies. Later, when he went back to bring fire into the new world, he did that by stealing as well. Today, a trotting Coyote is considered an omen. If a coyote trots across someone's path going east, it is a good sign; he will bring prosperity. If he is going any other direction, however, bad things may be in store, and it is time to get back into harmony and balance. Who is Coyote, then? His mistakes, foibles, curiosity, and misadventures have brought both good and evil to the Diné. His stories teach us about ourselves and what we should leave alone.

To purchase a larger version of the Trotting Coyote poster, contact the San Juan District Media Center at (435) 678-1229.