

The Acorn Maidens A Karuk Story

A long time ago, up in the heavens three acorn maidens, or young girls, were sitting down by the creek, watching the water go by when Creator came along and told them, "It's time to go now. Time to journey to the earth. The Human Beings are being made and you must be there, ready for them. For this journey, you must all have nice hats, but you must weave them yourselves."

The three girls gathered all their materials. They gathered their hazel sticks, their willow root and the beargrass and maidenhair fern to make their designs. They knew that this was a special journey and they all needed a special cap.

They began weaving their caps and it took them a while, as it does, when you weave a basket. It takes time. They had been weaving for several days, when all of a sudden Creator came back and said, "It's time to go. The human being is being created now and you must be there and be ready."

Black Oak had not finished her hat. She picked up her big cap that looked long because it hadn't been shaped yet. That's why today, when you see black oak acorns, they are long and they have a long cap on them.

Tan Oak Acorn did not clean the inside of her cap, and the sticks and roots stuck out the side of her basket, going in every which direction. She just wore it, wrong side out when she finished. Today, when you see tan oak acorns, you can tell them by their caps, which have pointy things going out in all directions.

Post Oak Acorn had finished her cap and it looked good. She finished and cleaned it well. Her cap was nice and round and perfect, just like it looks today.

The Tan Oak Acorn said, “Wouldn’t I be the best acorn soup, even though my hat is not clean?”

Now Tan Oak Acorn felt bad about her cap because she wasn’t finished and she began to wish bad luck toward Post Oak and Maul Oak Acorns because she was jealous of them. They got mad and wished for Tan Oak to be black. Their wish turned back on them and today, Live Oak and Maul Oak’s soups is black when made into acorn mush and Maul Oak is too hard to pound. Tan Oak tastes the best and is easy to find because her cap is so unique with her sticks sticking out all over the place.

When Black Oak Acorn spilled down to earth, it was striped. Now today, when one picks up Black Oak, it is still striped.

Then they went. Creator told them to put their faces into their caps on the trip down to earth. The acorn girls shut their eyes and then they turned their faces into their hats when they came down to the earth. They spilled out from the heavens into the human place. Then they said, “Humans will spoon us up. They were once spirits too, but they were heavenly spirits.”

Now today, when we look at acorns, we can see that they still have their faces turned into their caps, so that they will have a safe journey falling down from the tree.