

Yuki Myth: Fire is Stolen from Spider

FIRE IS STOLEN FROM SPIDER ¹

There was darkness. In the sweat-house there was a feast, and they were eating raw meat. Jack-rabbit received none, because he was an orphan child, and so he cried constantly. They whipped him and sent him out. There he stood crying, while inside they were eating and joking. The boy saw something, and he said in a sing-song voice, "You people who whipped me and are laughing and eating, I see something far off." And while he spoke he cried. After a while Coyote thought he heard something, and he said: "I think I hear that orphan boy saying something. You who always say I am wrong, and who laugh at me, had better listen." So they listened, and they heard the orphan boy, "You people who whipped me and are laughing and eating, I see something far off." And still he cried.

Coyote advised them to give the boy some meat, so that he would tell what he had seen. And when the boy had eaten, Coyote said, "I thought I heard you say something, my nephew." The boy stood there sobbing and sniffing, and did not answer. But Coyote was patient and kind, and at last the orphan boy said: "Do you see something yonder? Stand just here and look." So Coyote stood there, and he saw something red flare up and sink back. Then he went in and told what he had seen, and word was sent to all the people. They assembled to dance and sing, and then went to that place where they had seen the fire. All along the way they danced, while Coyote sang, "*Sukhalkashú . . . , sukhalkashú . . .* ['sit on top of a pine']."

In a row they danced toward the house. There sat Spider, holding fire in his abdomen. They danced and tried to make him laugh, because Coyote said that if he should laugh he would shake the fire out and they could secure some of it. But they could not make him laugh. Then Skunk and Mouse prepared for a special dance. The others sang, and they two danced together with their entrails dragging on the ground; and so comical were they that Spider gave a grunt of amusement. His fire gushed forth, and Dove thrust a dry stick into it and flew away. All followed him. As they hurried along, they set fire to the grass, so that Spider, pursuing them, had to give up because he could not endure the heat of the burning grass. They however ran to a lake and leaped into the water. Dove carried the fire clear to the coast, and when he returned he called: "*Uhu, uhu!* Are you people alive?" Coyote replied: "Yes, I was never well before this. We are all right." But he was badly scorched on one side.

Found at:<http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/curtis/viewPage.cgi?showp=&size=&id=nai.14.book.00000004&volume=14#nav>

Curtis, Edward. The North American Indian, pg. 170, 1924.