***Hospitality Stories from Native American sources***

1. One intriguing legend comes from the First Nations people of central Ontario. Their ‘Skyman’ tale may in fact be one of the earliest alien encounters on record.

According to the story recorded in 1917 by ethnologist Colonel G.E. Laidlaw, 500 years ago there was a large Ojibwa village about 550 native people living somewhere in our region. One day, a pair of them stumbled upon a stranger sitting on the grass in a field. This figure, a male, was notably “clean and shining bright.”

The natives approached the stranger and asked who he was and how he came to be in the field. “I am not one of you. I do not belong to this land. I dropped down from above,” the stranger explained.

Showing unusual hospitality, the Ojibwa invited him back to their village. The stranger agreed, but on one condition:  “Go home and clean the place where I will stay, and when you come back for me, I will go with you for a few days.”

Agreeing, the Ojibwa men went back to their community, told their fellow villagers about their experience, and cleaned the hut where they would house the ‘Skyman.’

The stranger did in fact accompany them to their village, but he was clearly restless. He watched the skies often and told people that in two days something would come and get him to take him back up to the sky.

One afternoon, Skyman looked up and said, “It is coming.” The villagers craned their necks and turned their eyes above and saw something that looked like a bright shining star streak down from the heavens and hover near the ground.

This was the most beautiful thing any of them had ever seen. Skyman entered the shining star and disappeared from view. The shining star then shot back into the sky and faded away.

Taken from <http://www.orangeville.com/news-story/1482326-strange-tale-ojibwa-tale-of-a-skyman-visitor-may-have-been-alien/>

1. **Ojibwe Clans**  
     
   According to Ojibwe tradition, the way the Ojibwe people organized themselves into grand families, called dodem or clans, is very important.  In the *History of the Ojibwe Nation*, William Warren explains the beginning of the Ojibwe clan system.  According to Ojibwe tradition, there were originally six human beings that came out of the sea to live among Ojibwe.  These six beings, which were Wawaazisii (Bullhead), Ajejauk (Crane), Makwa (Bear), Moosance (Little Moose), Waabizheshi (Marten), and Bineshii (Thunderbird), created the original clans.  One of the original beings, the Thunderbird, always covered his eyes, because when he looked at the Anishinabeg, they died. The other five beings urged Thunderbird to return to the sea because his powers were so strong. That is why the Anishinabeg do not have a Thunderbird clan today.

Warren recorded at least 20 offshoots of the original clans.  Clan symbols are still used today.  For example, when members are buried, their clan symbols appear on their graves to mark their lineage.  Also clan symbols appear in birch bark scrolls and treaty documents.

The clan system operated as a form of government, a method of organizing work, and a way of defining the responsibilities of each community member. Working together, the clans attended to the physical, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual needs of the community. Each was known by its totem (animal emblem).

While each clan differs, all are considered equal.  Following are some common clans and their distinct characteristics.

The largest clan was the Bear (Makwa) clan.  Bear clan members were war chiefs and warriors were known for their thick black hair that never whitened even in old age. The Bear Clan members were the strong and steady police and legal guardians. Bear Clan members spent a lot of time patrolling the land surrounding the village, and in so doing, they learned which roots, bark, and plants could be used for medicines to treat the ailments of their people.

The Fish (Giigo) clans - Bullhead (Wawaazisiig), Sturgeon (Namewug), Catfish (Maanamegwug), Northern Pike (Ginoozhez), Whitefish (Adikamegwug), Merman/Mermaid (Memegwesiwug), and Sucker (Namebinug) - were known for long life and baldness in old age.  Fish clan members claim that their ancestors were the first to appear out of the sea. The people of the Fish Clan were the teachers and scholars. They helped children develop skills and healthy spirits. They also drew on their knowledge to solve disputes between the leaders of the Crane and Loon Clans.

Crane (Ajejauk) clan members were known for their loud and clear voices and recognized as famous speakers. The Crane and the Loon Clans were given the power of Chieftainship. By working together, these two clans gave the people a balanced government with each serving as a check on the other.

The Wolf (Maiingan) clan produced scouts.  Wolf clan members lived mostly around Mille Lacs and St. Croix.

Members of the Martin (Waabizheski) clan served as pipe bearers and message carriers for the chiefs. The people of the Martin Clan were hunters, food gathers and warriors of the Ojibway. Long ago, warriors fought to defend their village or hunting territory. They became known as master strategists in planning the defense of their people.

Waubojeeg or White Fisher was the leader of the Caribou (Adik) clan.

The Bird Clan represented the spiritual leaders of the people and gave the nation its vision of well-being and its highest development of the spirit. The people of the Bird Clan were said to possess the characteristics of the eagle, the head of their clan, in that they pursued the highest elevations of the mind just as the eagle pursues the highest elevations of the sky.

In the age-old tradition, clan members of the same clan respectfully acknowledged each other with the greeting "Aaniin (hello!) Dodem."

Traditionally, Ojibwe people have had very close, extended family relationships.  Grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were all parts of a family unit.  Besides having many relatives, a person was also a member of a dodem, or clan.  Clan identity is passed through the father.

Members of the same clan, no matter how many miles apart, were one's brothers and sisters and were expected to extend hospitality, food and lodging to each other.

Ojibwe people belong to a tribe (band) and to the Ojibwe Nation.  Clan relationships help unite the various Ojibwe bands as one nation.  However, just like language dialects, community clan systems may vary slightly.

In addition to the information from The History of the Ojibwe Nation by  William Warren, some of the above information also came from The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway, Benton, Banai, Edward. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Indian Country Press, Inc. 1981

1. "I’ve heard that storytelling is a very important part of the Ojibwe culture. What are some traditional Ojibwe stories? "Because storytelling so important, we would like to review some of that material, and print the story of Papase (The Woodpecker) in this month’s Cultural Column. "According to Ojibwe legend, storytelling season begins with the first snow and ends with the first clap of thunder. Long ago, people owned stories or legends and only they could tell them. In order for another person to tell a particular story, he or she would have to get permission from its owner and offer the owner tobacco, a blanket, clothing, food or something else. Today, it is still customary to offer an Elder tobacco (or something else they like) for them to tell a story. "Through storytelling, Mille Lacs Band Elders help younger people learn about the world around them. When they grow up, these children continue the storytelling tradition with their own children and grandchildren. One often-told story, called Papase (The Woodpecker), teaches a lesson about greediness."

Papase

"A woman wearing a red scarf, a black dress, and a white apron was cooking in her kitchen early one morning when an old man approached her. “May I have some bread, please?" he asked. "Sure," she said. "The woman had just prepared a big batch of dough to make fry bread (a traditional Ojibwe bread), so she put a nice big piece of dough in the fry pan. It turned out to be a really nice piece and she thought, "I can’t give him this one — it’s much too nice." For the second piece, she put a smaller amount of dough in the pan. Well, this piece turned out much better than the first and she thought, "Oh, this one is also too nice to give to this old man." So, she started on a third piece. This time, she put barely any dough in the pan. When it was ready, she was very surprised, for this piece had turned out even more beautiful than the all the others. "Finally, the old man asked, "Is there any bread ready yet?" So she threw some crumbs in the pan and they produced by far the most beautiful piece of fry bread. This made her angry. "Quit begging," she cried. "Get out of here! You can’t have any of my bread!" The old man stopped begging all right. He stomped his foot a few times and said, "From now on you’re going to have to hunt and search for your food." And he turned the woman into a woodpecker."

Taken from <http://www.real-dream-catchers.com/Ojibwe_culture_and_language/traditional_ojibwe_entertainment.htm>

**4.** The Indian Concept of Sharing   Brant considered the concept of sharing to be a universal ethic amongst Aboriginal groups, with its origin in the need to

**[](http://www.riic.ca/the-guide/in-the-field/aboriginal-customs-and-protocols/riic-edited-65/)**

Credit: urbanrez.ca

show hospitality to other groups of hunters, even when there was not much food in the village. “To take more than one’s fair share or more than what one actually needs to survive is considered greedy and wasteful,” says Brant. This custom of sharing manifests itself in the principle of equality. “Every Indian is just as good as everybody else,” says Brant. Sharing and equality may be at play when a journalist, seeking to simplify a story by reducing it to key characters, gets push back from the people he’s interviewing. “You should interview so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so…” An Aboriginal person may be reluctant to be the main character or the focus of a news story, if it’s perceived that such a portrait will elevate one person in a community over others.

Taken from <http://www.riic.ca/the-guide/in-the-field/aboriginal-customs-and-protocols/>

**5. Cherokee Hospitality** Taken from a manuscript prepared by J.P. Evans in 1835.  
  
Hospitality is a prominent feature in Cherokee character and that instinctive impulse to "eat when you are hungry" is scrupulously complied with by them when among their own people and anything can be found acceptable to a hungry stomach. To such a height is this custom carried, that in many towns an invitation is not a necessary preliminary to eating; whether the person be a stranger or a relative; and from a native, no compensation is required for eating, lodging, and provender for beasts.

**Taken from http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/Culture/General/CherokeeHospitality.aspx**