



North America:

The Cherokee

Grandmother Spider steals the Sun

In the beginning, when the Earth was new, the Cherokee people lived in total darkness. They had no way of lighting their houses or lighting their way as they travelled about.

Fox said it wasn't fair: the people on the other side of the world had the Sun and had plenty of light and warmth, but they were too greedy to share it. So Possum said he would steal the Sun. He said that he could hide the Sun in his beautiful, big, bushy tail.

When he got to the other side of the world, Possum found the Sun hanging in a tree, blazing bright. Possum stepped forward bravely and took a piece of the Sun. He hid it in his big, bushy tail.

But the Sun was so hot, it burned all the fur from his tail. And that is why to this day the possum has a bald tail.

The people from the other side of the world found the piece of the Sun that Possum had stolen and took it back. Possum returned home, his burned, bare tail dragging behind him.

So now Buzzard said that he would fly to the other side of the world and bring the Sun back with him. He smiled, smoothing the feathers on his handsome face, and said he would wear the Sun as a hat to light his way home.

Buzzard flew off and when he came to the tree where the Sun was hanging, he swooped down, grasping the Sun in his sharp claws.

But when Buzzard tried to put the Sun on his head, it was so very, very hot; it burned every feather from his head and face. Instead of being handsome, he was now bald and very ugly (just as buzzards are to this day). The people from the other side of the world took the Sun back and Buzzard flew home.

So now Grandmother Spider came forward on her eight long legs and said that she would try. She made a pot – a big clay pot. Then Grandmother Spider spun a web; a web so long and strong it reached right across to the other side of the world.

Grandmother Spider scurried across her long web, so quickly and quietly that the people on the other side of the world did not see or hear her coming. They did not hear or see her as she scooped up the Sun in her clay pot and scurried back home.

And this is how clever Grandmother Spider brought the Sun and the gift of fire to the Cherokee people.

