

Greetings and Welcome to Beautiful July.

My wife and I had the pleasure of watching our year old grandson for a few days while my daughter enjoyed a camping trip. I call him Little Bear and he lives up to the name, like a young cub he is always on the move, poking into new territories and exploring things.

Lucky for me he enjoys story telling and will sit listening for a good length of time.

I told him the tale of "How the Birch Tree Got It's Scars" and thought I might share it with you. This is an old Algonquin tale my grandmother told me as a little cub. Nanahboozhoo was some what of a super hero in Algonquin tales and there are many stories about this "Son of The West Wind"

One day, as Nanahboozhoo was walking along on a sandy shore, he felt very hungry. It was autumn and the cool air had fueled his hunger greatly. As he wandered on he saw an object moving toward him. He had not long to wait before he saw that this object was a great black bear. He pulled up a young tree by the roots to use as a club and hid himself, preparing to kill the bear when he should come near. When the bear came near Nanahboozhoo jumped out of his hiding place and killed the bear with one great blow. He then built a big fire, singed all the hair off the bear, cut him up and roasted him. When the meat was cooked Nanahboozhoo cut it up into small pieces, for he intended to enjoy his feast as a leisurely meal. While he was busy preparing his feast he was annoyed by a strange sound among the tree tops, they rubbed together when the wind blew. Nanahboozhoo was very quick-tempered, and as the noise continued he determined to stop it. So he left his feast on the ground and climbed way up one of the trees to the spot where the other pressed against it.



He was trying to pull the two great trees apart when one of his hands got caught between them and was firmly held. While struggling to get loose he heard a pack of wolves running toward his bear meat. This made him struggle harder to get his hand free. The fierce wolves soon scented the food and had a good time devouring it, in spite of the shouting of Nanahboozhoo.

When Nanahboozhoo at length got his hand free and came down he found nothing left of his feast but the skull of the bear. He was very angry, not only at the wolves that had eaten his feast but also at the trees that had held him captive. As the wolves had run away he could not punish them, so he resolved that he would punish these great birch trees so that they would never give him such trouble again. He prepared a great whip from grape vines and with it he severely thrashed the trees. Up to this time the birch had been the most beautiful of trees. Its great trunk was of the purest white, without any blemish or blotch upon it. But ever since the thrashing Nanahboozhoo gave it, it has had to carry the marks of that terrible whipping; and that is why the white birch tree is so covered with scars.