**How Coyote Stole Fire**

**A Native American Fable**

Long ago, the Fire Beings were the only people who had fire. They guarded it closely and wouldn't share it with other tribes or animals. This didn't matter so much in spring and summer, but in winter many young children and old people died from the icy cold.

Just before the next winter, some of the animals called a meeting. "We can't let our children and grandparents die from the cold this year," said Squirrel. "We have to get fire from the Fire Beings to keep warm."

"How can we do that?" asked Chipmunk. "The Fire Beings won't share it with us".

"Let's ask Coyote for help" said Frog. "He's crafty and cunning, and he'll know how to get fire".

Coyote listened and thought about the problem. Then he smiled a cunning smile."There is a way to get fire from the selfish Fire Beings" he said.

"How? How can we do that?" asked Chipmunk.

"We'll take it!" answered Coyote slyly. "I have a plan. Follow me!"

Coyote lead the animals to the Fire Beings' camp on top of the mountain. The others hid in the bushes while Coyote walked into the camp.

"Who's there?" screeched one of the Beings. "Someone's trying to steal our fire".

"It's all right," hissed another. "It's only an old moth eaten coyote". "Huummph! Moth eaten indeed," thought Coyote, but he didn't say anything. He lay down by the fire and pretended to go to sleep, keeping one eye half open.

Three Fire Beings sat nearby. After a few minutes, a banging noise started in the bushes. It was Coyote's friends.

"What's that horrible noise?" cried the Fire Being. "Who's there?" The three of them went to investigate.

Seeing his chance, Coyote snatched up a glowing piece of fire and ran off down the mountain as fast as he could. Realizing they had been tricked, the two Fire Beings screamed and chased after him. They nearly caught Coyote for they were as fast as the wind. One of them stretched out her claws and touched the tip of his tail. The heat turned the hairs white.

Coyote threw the fire into the air towards Squirrel. She caught it in her tail and scampered off over stumps and boulders. The fire scorched her so badly, that her tail curled up over her back. She was almost caught, until Chipmunk bounded up beside her.

"Me! Me! Throw it to me!" Catching the fire, Chipmunk turned to run. One of the hags clawed her back leaving three stripes down it. Chipmunk threw the fire to Frog, but one of the Beings grabbed his tail.

"Let me go!" yelled Frog. He squirmed and struggled so much that his eyeballs bulged and he thought his heart would burst. With one last mighty leap he tore himself free, leaving his beautiful long tail behind, still wriggling in the Fire Being's claw.

Frog threw the fire to Wood and Wood swallowed it. The Fire Beings hit Wood and kicked him and cut him with their knives, but still Wood didn't spit out the fire. At last the Fire Beings gave up and went home and were never heard from again.

Coyote called all the animals together to teach them how to get the fire from Wood. "Fire is a gift for everyone. If you rub two dry sticks of Wood together very fast Wood will get itchy and give you some fire. From now on you will be warm in winter".

And that is why today, Coyote's tail has a white tip, squirrel's tail curls around over her back, chipmunk's coat has white stripes and frog has no tail. But Coyote shared fire with humans so now everyone is warm in winter.