

Read the Navajo Creation Story. Then write a report on it with enough detail that I know you read it.

The Navajo Creation Story

The Navajo creation story involves three underworlds where important events happened to shape the Fourth World where we now live.

The Navajo were given the name Ni'hookaa Diyan Diné by their creators. It means "Holy Earth People" or "Lords of the Earth". Navajos today simply call themselves "Diné", meaning "The People". The Tewa Indians were the first to call them "Navahu", which means "the large area of cultivated land". The Mexicans knew them as "Apaches Du Nabahu" (Apaches of the Cultivated Fields), where "Apache" (Enemy) was picked up from the Zuni Indian language. The "Apaches Du Nabahu" were known as a special group somewhat distinct from the rest of the Apaches. Alonso de Benavides changed the name to "Navaho" in a book written in 1630. The name the Diné officially use for themselves is "Navajo".

According to the Diné, they emerged from three previous underworlds into this, the fourth, or "Glittering World", through a magic reed. The first people from the other three worlds were not like the people of today. They were animals, insects or masked spirits as depicted in Navajo ceremonies. First Man ('Altsé Hastiin), and First Woman ('Altsé 'Asdzáá), were two of the beings from the First or Black World. First Man was made in the east from the meeting of the white and black clouds. First Woman was made in the west from the joining of the yellow and blue clouds. Spider Woman (Na ashje'ii 'Asdzáá), who taught Navajo women how to weave, was also from the first world.

And then Coyote caused trouble. Walking by the river, he spied in the water a baby with long black hair. He lifted the baby from the river and hid it under his blanket, telling no one. Colorful storms and torrential rains approached from all directions. Everyone fled to the protective hollow of the giant reed, which carried them upward. But the reed stopped growing before it reached the next world. So Locust helped the Diné make a hole that led to the Fourth World, an island surrounded by water. Seeing the waters still rising in the Third World, the leaders asked who had angered the Water Monster. Coyote tightened his blanket about his body and the leaders ordered him to open it. There was the water baby. Coyote returned the baby to the Third World and the waters receded.

Once in the Glittering World, the first thing the people did was build a sweat house and sing the Blessing Song. Then they met in the first house (hogan) made exactly as Talking God (Haashch'eelti'i) had prescribed. In this hogan, the people began to arrange their world, naming the four sacred mountains surrounding the land and designating the four sacred stones that would become the boundaries of their homeland. In actuality, these mountains do not contain the symbolic sacred stones. The San Francisco Peaks (Dook'o'oslííd), represents the Abalone and Coral stones. It is located just north of Flagstaff, and is the Navajo's religious western boundary. Mt. Blanco (Tsisnaasjini'), in Colorado, represents the White Shell stone, and represents the Navajo's religious eastern boundary. Mt. Taylor (Tsoodzil), east of Grants, New Mexico, represents the Turquoise stone, and represents the Navajo's religious southern boundary. Mt. Hesperus (Dibé Nitsaa), in Colorado, represents the Black Jet stone, and represents the Navajo's religious northern boundary. Pictures of these sacred mountains can be found by clicking here.

After setting the mountains down where they should go, the Navajo deities, or "Holy People", put the sun and the moon into the sky and were in the process of carefully placing the stars in an orderly way. But the Coyote, known as the trickster, grew impatient from the long deliberations being held, and seized the corner of the blanket where it lay and flung the remaining stars into the sky.

The Holy People continued to make the necessities of life, like clouds, trees and rain. Everything was as it should be when the evil monsters appeared and began to kill the new Earth People. But a miracle happened to save them, by the birth of Ever Changing Woman (Asdzaa Nadleehe) at Gobernador Knob (Ch'óol'í'í), New Mexico.

Changing Woman grew up around El Huerfano Mesa (Dzil Na'oodilii), in northern New Mexico. She married the Sun and bore two son, twins, and heroes to the Navajo people. They were known as "Monster Slayer" and "Child-Born-of-Water". The twins traveled to their father the Sun who gave them weapons of lighting bolts to fight the dreaded monsters. Every place the Hero Twins killed a monster it turned to stone. An example of this is the lave flows near Mt. Taylor in New Mexico, believed to be the blood from the death of Ye'iiitsoh, or the "Monster who Sucked in People". All of the angular rock formations on the reservation, such as the immense Black Mesa (Dzil Yíjiin), are seen as the turned-to-stone bodies of the monsters.

With all of the monsters dead, the Navajo deities, or "Holy People", turned their attention to the making of the four original clans. Kiiyaa aanii, or Tall House People, was the first clan. They were made of yellow and white corn. Eventually other clans traveled to the area round the San Juan River, bring their important contributions to the tribe. Some were Paiutes who brought their beautiful baskets. Others were Pueblos who shared their farming and weaving skills. Still others were Utes and Apaches.

For her husband, the "Sun", to visit her every evening, Changing Woman went to live in the western sea on an island made of rock crystal. Her home was made of the four sacred stones: Abalone, White Shell, Turquoise, and Black Jet. During the day she became lonely and decided to make her own people. She made four clans from the flakes of her skin. These were known as the Near Water People, Mud People, Salt Water People, and Bitter Water People. When these newly formed clans heard that there were humans to the east who shared their heritage, they wanted to go meet them.

Changing Woman gave her permission for them to travel from the western sea to the San Francisco Peaks. They then traveled through the Hopi mesas where they left porcupine, still commonly found there today. Then they traveled toward the Chuska Mountains and on to Mt. Taylor. Finally, the people arrived at Dinetah, the Diné traditional homeland, and joined the other clans already living there. Dinetah is located in the many canyons that drain the San Juan River about 30 miles east of Farmington, New Mexico.