

Native American Heritage: THE HISTORY OF Storytelling

Citizen Potawatomi Nation: The Seven Grandfathers



Photo courtesy of: <http://www.thelonghouse.org/Medicine-Wheel-and-Seven-Grandfather-Teachings.html>

Storytelling is an important aspect of Potawatomi life. From November to February, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation practices winter tales, where children gather to learn life lessons and stories of their ancestors. Most of the Potawatomi winter tales involve Nanabozho or Wiske, who is a trickster character, usually in the shape of a man with rabbit ears. In the past, the stories were told in the winter months because the long, snow covered season was when the Potawatomi believed the earth and spirits were asleep, leaving little risk of awakening those mischievous entities that might hear their name spoken. Winter tales are not just stories of morality, though. Today, they provide an opportunity for tribal members to gather together in celebration and for the children to practice the Potawatomi language, an Algonquian spoken language that the tribe preserves through classes at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Read the story of **The Seven Grandfathers** on page 7 of the **Native American Heritage: The History of Storytelling workbook** <https://nie.newsok.com/educators/curriculum/native-american-heritage-storytelling/> and answer the following questions:

- What was Shkabwes sent to Earth to find?
- What were the seven gifts given to the boy by the seven grandfathers? What is the significance of these gifts and their opposites?
- What is the moral of the story?
- If you had to choose seven gifts to help the people live in harmony with Earth, what would they be? Would you use the same gifts the grandfathers sent, or others?
- Write your own story about the tools you would send to earth to help people live in harmony.