

The Great Corn Woman Spirit

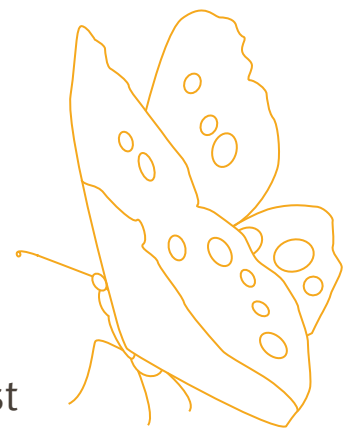
There was once a time when the Cherokee people planted their corn in these beautiful valleys. And the Great Corn Woman Spirit would come down out of the heavens, and she would walk amongst the fields of the Cherokee people.

And the corn would grow—maybe, sometimes as tall as eight feet tall. And every stalk, many times, would have as many as three to four ears on that stalk. And the corn was huge. The kernels were beautiful, and many times, many, many colors. The Cherokees loved their corn fields, and they planted this particular year when, all of a sudden, they realized their corn was not going to grow. It wasn't coming up, and they were really concerned.

So they talked to the Great Spirit and asked him what was wrong, and why he hadn't sent the Corn Woman Spirit down to their fields. And he says, "I have sent her. She's down there somewhere, and you must go find her because something terrible has happened to her."

They went looking for the Corn Woman Spirit all over the mountains and the valleys, and the people couldn't find her. So they called on their animal relatives and bird relatives, and they began to search all over the place. And the ravens, and the crows, and the hawks, and the eagles and animals were searching when, all of a sudden, one of the ravens came flying back in and says, "We found her! We found her!"

They went to this dark cave, and they said, "She's down in this cave. She's been tied up by the evil spirit, Hunger. And we must figure out a way to get her out." So the raven said, "I think my family and I can do it."



So they gathered together all the ravens in the forest, and they flew down into this dark cave. Of course, they were black as night, and so they couldn't be seen. They lighted upon the ledges and perches, and they waited until the signal was given. Then, all of a sudden, they flew down upon this evil spirit, Hunger. They clawed him, and they pecked him so badly, they frightened him right out into the sunlight. And when the sun hit the evil spirit, he melted away, and this was him.

The ravens, with their strong beaks, untied the Corn Woman Spirit and let her walk out into the sunlight. And when she did, the Cherokee corn once again began to grow. It grew beautifully, and the Cherokees did well with their corn that year. And from that day forward, they realized when they saw the blades of the corn waving back and forth, they knew that the Corn Woman Spirit was walking amongst the fields of the Cherokee people. So when you're riding by a corn field, just look out. And when you see those big blades waving, you'll know that the Corn Woman Spirit is there. Her name is **Ꭰᎎᎎ** [*se-lu*] in Cherokee, which means "Corn".

What do you think we might learn from this story? Why would the animals help the humans look for the Corn Woman Spirit?

