

## How Summer Came to Be

Morning Glory was tired of winter. Sometimes it seemed as if Giiwedionong (the North Wind) would never give up and go back to his home in the land of ice. Because of his cold breath, Gitchee-Gumee (Lake Superior) was not only covered with snow, but frozen so hard that you could not tell the Great Lake from the land.

“Will O-pee-chee (the robin) ever come again?” she asked her grandfather.

“Be patient Morning Glory. I have lived for many winters and he may seem a long time coming, but he always comes,” Grandfather replied. “Look there in the north. See that cluster of stars? Do you know the name we give it?”

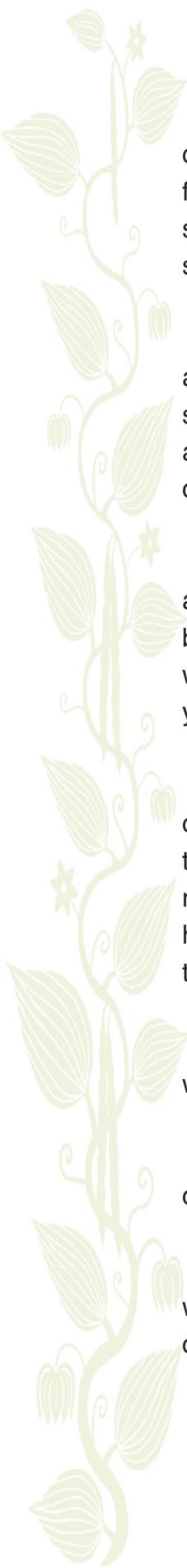
“I know it,” said Eagle Feather, Morning Glory’s brother. “It is O-jeeg an-nung, the fisher stars. If you look at them a certain way, you can see the body of a fisher with an arrow through its tail.”

“A fisher? Oh...that’s a furry animal similar to a fox. I think marten is another name for it,” said Morning Glory.

“Come sit by the fire and I will tell you the story of the fisher stars and how summer came to be,” said grandfather.

“In the wild forest, near the great lake, lived a mighty hunter named O-jeeg. No one knew the woods as well as O-jeeg. He had the cunning of a fox, the endurance of a wolf and the speed of a wild turkey when it runs from the scent of danger. When O-jeeg shot an arrow, it always hit the mark. When he set out on a journey, no snow or storm could turn him back. O-jeeg was friends with all the animals and they helped him if he asked them.

O-jeeg had a wife whom he dearly loved, and a son of thirteen years who also promised to be a great hunter like his father. O-jeeg and his son both hunted often for, at this time, the world was always cold and filled with snow. People needed the animals they hunted for food but also for their warm pelts to shut out the cold.



There was a group of wise old men that heard the sky was not the only roof of our world. They heard that there was a beautiful world where birds with bright feathers sang sweetly through a pleasant warm season called summer. O-jeeg's son listened to the group of wise men and he dreamed of living in the time of summer. Perhaps he could find some way to bring summer to Earth.

As he hunted, he dreamed of his desire for summer. One day, he came across a squirrel. He drew back his bow and aimed at the squirrel. Suddenly the squirrel spoke, "I know you dream of summer. If you do not kill me, I will tell you a secret about summer. We animals know of the crack in the sky where summer came in at one time. I can help you find summer, if you spare my life."

The son did not kill the squirrel and listened to what he had to say. "Go home and prepare a feast for your father and his animal friends. Obey the rule that no birds be asked to attend the feast. Furthermore, you must ask your father if he will seek the crack in the sky to reach the place where summer dwells. Influence your father so that he agrees to do this."

The boy did as the squirrel directed and assembled a feast. He invited the otter, the beaver, the lynx, the badger and the wolverine. The lynx was the first to speak and took the authority to say what he knew to be true. "There is a high mountain that none of you have seen. No one has seen the top because it is hidden by clouds. I am told this mountain touches the sky, and we will be able to find the crack through the sky there."

"Do you know how to get there?" asked O-jeeg. "If we could go there, maybe we could find the summer my son longs for."

"Yes, I know how to get there, but it will take many moons and the journey is difficult."

O-jeeg knew this was his son's greatest wish. So the next day he bade his wife and his son good-bye, and he and the lynx began their journey with the other animal friends not far behind.



In three moons and twenty days, they came to the foot of the mountain. Then up and up they climbed until they passed quietly through the clouds. To their great delight, the sky seemed so close that they could touch it. The lynx was right!

“Now,” said O-jeeg, “which of you animals can jump the highest?” The otter grinned. “Jump then,” commanded O-jeeg. The otter jumped and sure enough his head hit the sky. But the sky was harder than his head and he fell back to the earth.

Then beaver said he would try to jump, but his attempt failed worse than the otter.

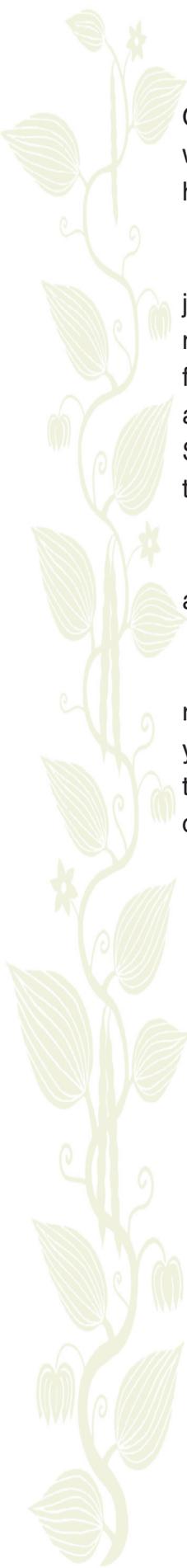
Finally, the wolverine said he would try and took his place. He jumped and made a dent.

“It’s cracking!” shouted O-jeeg. “Jump again!”

The wolverine jumped a second and third time until finally the crack allowed the wolverine to jump right through. All of the other animals followed.

Looking around them, they beheld a beautiful land. It was summer here and all the land was green. There were flowers and fruit was plentiful on the trees and bushes. Streams wandered through the meadows flowing freely rather than being locked in ice. Along the banks of the lakes were the lodges of the people who lived in summer. When O-jeeg looked into the lodges he found cages filled with beautiful birds. He felt sorry for the birds, so he opened the cages, and the birds flew out. Already the warm air of summer had begun to rush through the hole made by the wolverine. Now the birds followed.

The Sky Dwellers came over a hill and saw what was happening. They saw the strangers that had come through the crack and the beautiful birds escaping. They shouted for the seasons to come back, but spring, summer and autumn had already escaped through the opening to the world below as did many of their birds. The wolverine and other animals, too, had managed to reach the hole and descend to the Earth, before the sky dwellers could catch them. However,



O-jeeg was not as fortunate. There were still some birds that he thought his son would like to see, so he continued opening cages. By this time, the Sky Dwellers had closed the hole and O-jeeg was trapped.

The Sky Dwellers picked up their bows and arrows and began to chase O-jeeg. As the Sky Dwellers pursued him, he changed himself into a fisher and ran northward along the plains as fast as he could. The Sky Dwellers ran even faster, so the fisher climbed a tall tree. The Sky Dwellers were good marksmen, and O-jeeg was hit in his tail by an arrow. As he sat in the tree, he watched the Sky Dweller approach and he grew fearful. When the Sky Dwellers reached the tree, O-jeeg noticed the doodem (clan) marks on their arms.

“Cousins,” he cried. “I beg you. Please do not hurt me. Go and leave me here alone.”

The Sky Dwellers granted his request. That is how it came to be that the fisher remained in the sky where you can see him plainly for yourself. On a clear night, you can see the arrow that the sky dwellers shot through his tail. The Indians call them the fisher stars, O-jeeg-an-nung, but the white men call it the constellation of the Plough.