



The Magic Pots

A long time ago, a very old woman lived in an Ojibwe village. Besides the wigwam she lived in, she also had a separate bark house where she kept five beautiful pots on a shelf. These pots were magical and were not supposed to be used for cooking or storage. Instead, the old woman kept them there so the other women of the village could come and look at them. The women would be inspired and go home to create their own pots to use. No one could make pottery without the inspiration of the magic pots and, to keep them safe, no one but the old woman was allowed to touch the pots.

One day, all of the women went out at the same time to pick berries, including the old woman. Meanwhile, in the village, five little girls were left behind to tend to their chores. They quickly gathered firewood and did all of their other chores. Then the girls got together to play. Out of curiosity, the girls went to the old woman's bark house where she kept the magic pots. At first, they only wanted to see how beautiful the pots were. But soon that was not enough for them. The girls got the pots down from their shelf, took them outside and played with them, even though the old woman had forbidden anyone to touch the pots.

Suddenly, as the girls were playing, a wolf appeared. The girls were very frightened and dashed into a nearby wigwam to get away from the wolf. As they ran, one of the girls tripped on the birch bark sheet they used to cover the ground under the pots. Instantly there was a noise like thunder. When the wolf was gone, the girls came out and discovered that all of the magic pots had been shattered into tiny pieces.

Soon, the old woman returned from picking berries and saw her broken pots. She realized what had happened and was very angry. She went to find the five girls. When she found the girls, a magical thing happened. The disobedient girls were changed into five black crows which flew away, cawing. The people of the village felt this was fair because the girls did not follow the rules.



Without the magic pots for inspiration, the women no longer knew how to make beautiful pottery. That is why the Ojibwe no longer make pots. However, the crows live on, and in the summer you can see them in a tall tree, uttering a mournful “caw, caw.”