

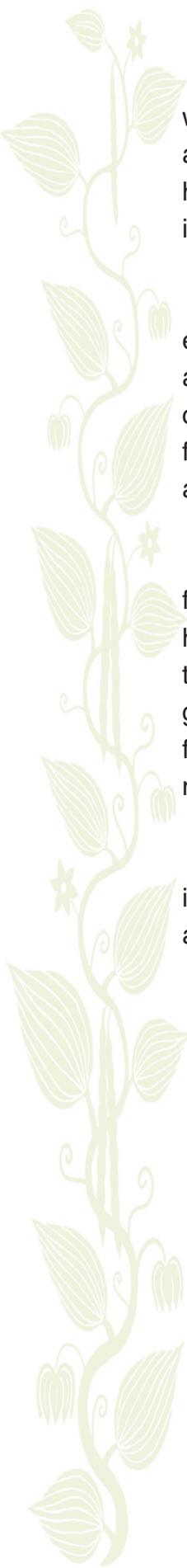
The Story of Redfeather

There once was a little boy called Redfeather who lived with his great-grandfather. They lived in a village near a great big lake full of frogs. Redfeather's great-grandfather taught him to shoot with a bow and arrows. The old grandfather also told Redfeather stories about the different ways of the creatures in their meadow.

Springtime came, and in the evenings the entire village could hear the noisy frogs. The sound they heard was the old lady frogs croaking and sharpening their knives to butcher the crawfish for dinner. Every day Redfeather would take his bow and arrow and practice hunting by killing all the frogs and crawfish he could find. One day a heron came along and told Redfeather that she would give him her best feather if he would leave the frogs alone. She told him that she had a nest of babies to feed and that he was wasting her food by killing all the frogs and crayfish. Redfeather said, "Ha! I don't want your dirty old feathers. You can keep your feathers and leave me alone. I can do what I want."

The heron was very upset. She called the other birds together for a meeting to figure out what to do about Redfeather, who was making life difficult for so many of them. Near Redfeather's village there was an island with some large trees on it, and on this island lived a very old and very wise owl. Every evening Redfeather would go out and refuse to come in to bed, and run around and be noisy. This disturbed the owl and he could not hunt. The crane and the owl and other birds all complained about Redfeather because he scared away the rabbits and small birds. The crane said that she was starving because he killed the frogs and the birds. No one could live in peace. They decided that he must be punished.

One evening the owl perched himself on a tree close to Redfeather's wigwam, and said, "Hoo Hoo!" Redfeather's great-grandfather said to him, "Redfeather, come in. Don't you hear that owl calling?" But Redfeather said, "I'll just get my biggest arrow and shoot him." Grandfather said, "The owl has large ears and he can put rabbits and other food in them. He might catch you too. You'd better come in and go to sleep." But Redfeather disobeyed his grandfather and



went out and shot at the owl. He missed, and while he was out looking for the arrow, the owl swooped down and picked him up. The owl stuck Redfeather in his ear and flew off with him. The owl flew across the lake to his island, and up into an old oak tree where his nest of baby owls were.

He set Redfeather down in the nest and told his babies, "When you get big enough to eat meat, you shall eat Redfeather." The little owls were quite excited at this. Then the owl flew away. The next day, the owl called to the crane and the other birds and said, "When your babies are old enough, they'll feast on Redfeather. I have him confined in my oak tree." So Redfeather was kept a prisoner, and he cried. He tried to escape, but he couldn't get down.

Back in the village, all the Indians knew Redfeather was lost. His great-grandfather asked all the living beings to help him find Redfeather. At last they found him, trapped in the owl's tree. The spirits told the great-grandfather to give a tremendous feast and ask the owl to return Redfeather. His great-grandfather gave a huge feast, and Redfeather was returned to his great-grandfather. Redfeather was so happy to be home that he promised that he would never again misuse the food that the Great Spirit had made for the birds.

This is why people should only hunt what they need to feed their families. This is also why when people gather berries and plants, they leave some for the birds and other animals.