

## A STORY OF THE STAR BLANKET

Years ago, the buffalo 'Paskwâw mostos' was the great source of life and energy. There is a story about Paskwâw mostos and his relationship with his brothers, the humans. It was said: One day man was weak. He had eaten his fill of roots and herbs and berries, but he was weak, and though he wrapped himself in grasses, he was cold. In the end he was desperate, both for himself and for his wife and children, for the winter was coming.

In his misery he fell face down onto Mother Earth, and he prayed. He opened his heart to his Mother, and he was heard. Out of the mist his brother, Paskwâw mostos, came toward him. Paskwâw mostos said nothing at first; he only looked, but then he had pity. 'My brother,' said Paskwâw mostos, 'Listen to me. We are all children of one Creator; we share with each other. I see you are weak and I am strong. You are cold and I am warm. Your whole body is pitiful; your fingers cannot help you to dig for food.

'Listen, my brother, I will make you a sacred promise. I will take care of you. I will do what Creator expects from us who are related. Listen to me carefully, and from now on do as I tell you.

'For your food I will give you my flesh. Take it. For your clothing and covering I will give you my skin. Take it. For tools I will give you my bones. Take them. Only remember that Creator, the Maker of us all, is watching that you use all things right and with a blessing.

'When you need me, stand on a high hill and call, I will come. When you have taken what you need from me and from my other brothers, stand on the same high hill and give thanks. Do not give thanks to me or to us, because we do what is required. Give thanks to Creator who makes all of us healthy and gives all of us a promise of happiness. Leave a mark there on the hill to show that you have given thanks, and everyone will know that you and your family are worthy people.'

And so it was. Before the hunt the camp leader stood on a hill and called to Paskwâw mostos. 'Listen brother, We are here and we need what you have to share with us. Come! Let us take your strength into us.' And Paskwâw mostos came. When the hunt was finished the first flesh was lifted up in a ceremony of public thanks. The hide was tanned and made into a covering. The covering was given at the important times of life, at birth, at puberty, at marriage and death. It was painted with the earth's color into a bright star, Creator's Eye. When the Creator is with you, covering you, watching you, you are forever safe.

Today, Paskwâw mostos is gone. Women now have only cloth with which to make Creator's Eye. But they have not forgotten their power to make a blessing nor to bring Creator onto their children and their family.

The pride of every Native home is Creator's Eye- the morning star quilt. It lies folded to wait as a gift. It covers the bed, and it wraps the dead. It makes sacred whatever it covers. It is a sacramental. It is a visible image that holds an invisible reality. 'It will not leave you orphans'" ("Star Blanket", January 2001).