

Where the First People Came From

A Cree legend

The other land was above. It was like this land we live in, except that it was cold there. From this land above there came two people, one woman and one man.

Someone said to them, "Do you want to go see yonder land which is below?"

"Yes," they said, "we will go there."

"The land," someone told them, "is different from this one where we dwell. It is cold yonder. And sometimes it is hot. If you wish to go there, however, you must first see the spider at the end of this land."

So they went to see the spider.

He asked them, "Do you want to go and see yonder land, the one which is below?"

"Yes," they said.

"Very well," said the spider. "I shall make a line so that I may lower you."

Then he told them, "There will be someone there who will teach you how to live once you have reached it. He will tell you everything, so you will get along well."

Then he instructed them on what to do during their trip. "Only one must look," he said to them, "until you have made contact with the earth. You may both look then." They were told that

if they both looked together, before they came to the land, they would go into the great eagle's nest and would never be able to climb down.



Figure 1.13

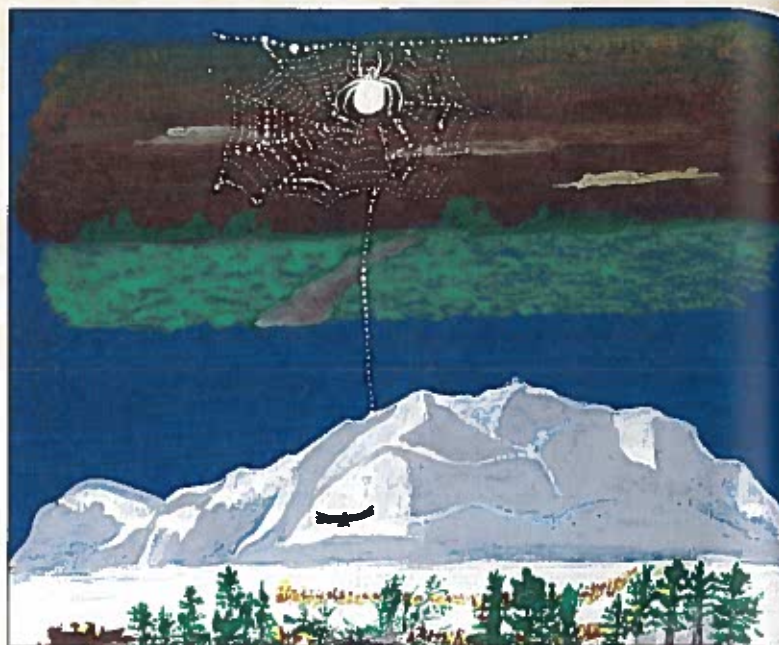


Figure 1.14

As they went along, one looked and the other did not. At last one told the other, "Now the land is in sight. Now the rivers are in sight."

Then one told the other, "Now the lakes are in sight. Now the grass."

Then they both looked before they arrived, as they were right at the top of the trees. They went into the great eagle's nest, having ignored their instructions.

Then the bear arrived at the bottom of the tree. They said to him, "Come and help us."

The bear got up on his hind legs to see them. Then the wolverine came. Together the bear and the wolverine brought the man and woman down.

The bear taught them everything about how to keep alive on the earth.

The people began to multiply from one couple, the persons who had come from another land. They lived giving birth to their children generation after generation. That is us right up until today. That is why we are in this country.