

## Shasta Indian Tales Book Reviews

1. A small but interesting book called *Shasta Indian Tales* offers residents of southern Oregon and northernmost California an opportunity to learn more about the area's earlier residents....The land of the Shasta Indians ranged generally from Mount Shasta north to the Rogue River, and from Happy Camp and the middle of the Applegate Valley east to Mt. McLoughlin. One tale describes how Great Spirit created Mount Shasta by making a hole in the sky and pushing ice and snow through it. Others deal with creation ("How People Came to Be"), death ("Why Cricket is Black"), and the heavens ("Why the Sun Rolls Along," "Why the Stars are Scattered in the Sky").

A recurring character in *Shasta Indian Tales* is Coyote, an individual who is both good and bad, a hero at one point, greedy villain at another. Coyote dies in some of the tales but always seems to return to life. Coyote contends with grizzly bears, fires, grandmothers, gamblers, even the devil. One particularly interesting legend, "Coyote and the Ten Moons," describes how the Indians managed to shorten the length of winter. In the story, moons are months. Originally, winter was 10 months long. Coyote, with the help of a bird named Toruk, does away with five of the moons in hand-to-hand combat. One by one, Storm Moon, Snowflake Moon, Wind Moon, Hailstone Moon, and Tornado Moon bite the dust. Now, winter lasts only five months.

"The Dead Brought Back from the Other World" is another interesting yarn, perceptive in light of more recent discoveries about death and dying. In it, a husband tries to revive his dead wife, negotiating with a character in the Other World named Fire Tender. The book concludes with a lengthy story called "Coyote and the Rogue River People." The plot is complex, involving gambling, death and resurrection, and game playing. *Shasta Indian Tales*...makes for easy, fast reading." (Cleve Twitchell, *The Mail Tribune*, Medford, Oregon, September 29, 1983)

2. *Shasta Indian Tales* compiled by Rosemary Holsinger and illustrated by P. I. Piemme....The 47-page paperback contains 29 stories mostly gathered from the Siskiyou County, Mount Shasta area, and of the Shasta Indian tribe. The coyote figures prominently in the tales as both a trickster and a hero. Both children and adults will delight in these stories. They are not only entertaining, but also informative learning tools. They teach us about different cultures and different beliefs. Anyone who enjoys mythology will enjoy *Shasta Indian Tales*....

The compiler, Rosemary Holsinger, is a teacher. She graduated from Stanford University with a master's degree and has taught ethnic literature courses. She lives in Etna, a community in the Siskiyou Mountains....The book was funded in part by the Shasta Arts Council and is well worth reading." (*Auburn Journal*, Feb. 27, 1983)

3. *Shasta Indian Tales* is a collection of Native American tales that are derived from a tribe in Northern California. This tribe has a high respect toward nature, and only takes what they need to survive. The Shasta made their own tools and utensils and play card games for fun. The characteristics of this tribe are presented in numerous tales throughout the book. The tales recount the basic creation story about how people and animals came into existence and how the great Spirit created mountains. Coyote is one of the main characters depicted throughout the tales, and was one of the first people to form the Shasta tribe. The twenty-nine different myths

represent origins, tricksters, activities, and much more. They are sure to delight readers of all ages who enjoy a classic myth or folklore. The illustrations are created with simple black and white drawings that provide the reader with extra information about the tale. Intended to preserve classic Native American tales, making it a perfect book for multi-cultural studies. *Oneota Reading Journal*, Fall 2005