

The Bear Claw Story

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(Edited by Raul Salmon)

Many moons ago, there was a peaceful Indian village nestled in the great forests to our west. In this village was an adventurous boy, about your age, named Running Bear. He loved to hunt and fish and was very good at both.

One day, Running Bear had just reached his favorite fishing spot at a small mountain lake when he heard the bushes rustle not far from him. Knowing well the sounds of the forest, he knew this *could* mean danger, so he climbed up the nearest tree. Suddenly, two bears, one slightly smaller than the other, crashed through the bushes just below him, fighting so fiercely they did not even see him - or the steep ridge nearby. The two fought right over the edge, crashing far below, never to be seen again.

Just as Running Bear decided it was safe to come down, he heard another rustling in the bushes. Since this time it was not as dangerous sounding, he carefully looked in to the brush. There, he saw a nervous bear cub trying its best to hide.

This explained the fighting bears. A mother bear was protecting her cub by chasing off an intruder. Running Bear thought of the cub's chances of survival, being all alone. The two were immediately attracted to one another, especially the cub to the freshly picked berries that Running Bear kept feeding him. This was the beginning of something bigger than either of them could have ever dreamed. The two became very good friends, playing games like hide and seek, wrestling and they even made a game of fishing.

As Running Bear and the cub headed toward the village with the fish they had caught, he feared how the villagers might react to the bear cub. (What would your parents say if you brought home a bear cub?) So, he ran to tell his mother right away. His mother warned him of the danger involved, but told him he should talk with his father.

The village men had just returned from a successful Buffalo hunt, so knowing his father would be in a good mood, Running Bear ran to talk with his father. He too warned Running Bear of the dangers involved with such a powerful thing of nature, but after watching the two of them play together, he told Running Bear to seek the guidance of their village's wise, old medicine man.

The thought of confronting the most powerful and wise man in their tribe (and perhaps the world) scared Running Bear. However, Running Bear wanted very much to keep the cub as a friend. As they approached the medicine man's teepee, the medicine man could already see what was coming.

The boy had obviously been warned of the dangers so the medicine man told Running Bear of the future and how man is not meant to tame such a powerful thing of nature. However, when he looked the boy in the eye, he also told him that to have a friend in

nature with this kind of power could be a greater thing than even he as a Medicine Man could imagine. He also told him the bear cub would some day return to nature, so he should be the best friend he could be for now.

With that information, the two spent the rest of the year doing the things they enjoyed most. In the fall, they found a cave for the bear to hibernate in for the winter. Running Bear took extra roots and berries to the cave for his friend to eat when he woke briefly during his winter slumber. What do bear cubs do when they hibernate? They grow very fast!

When spring finally came, Running Bear was a bit nervous to find his friend was now a *full grown* bear. They immediately started playing the games they both enjoyed and all was as it had been in the fall. When the bear showed up at the village, the Indians were not scared as they knew they indeed had a powerful friend.

When Indian boys prove their manhood by their hunting and fishing skills, they are given a new name. Running Bear was renamed “Little Bear” and his friend the bear became known as “Big Bear”. The two made quite a team and spent many hunting seasons together. Eventually though, there was a season when Big Bear did *not* return. Little Bear remembered the words of the wise, old medicine man and thought that Big Bear had finally gone back to nature. Many years passed and Little Bear became a great brave in their tribe.

Bears are territorial. To mark their ownership of an area, they stand up and reach as high as they can and put deep scratches into a tree with their mighty claws. That way when a new bear comes in to an area, they can see the markings of how big and powerful the bear is that lives in that territory. Young bears looking for a territory of their own often confront other bears in their territory. The larger, more powerful and most experienced bear usually wins. Big Bear undoubtedly had to fight for his territory many times through the years and on the other hand, Little Bear had to be very careful to recognize the territorial markings of the different bears throughout the areas where he hunted.

Little Bear was a fast runner, but no one can out run a bear. One day, while hunting in the territory of a very large bear, a great bear popped up on the trail in front of Little Bear. There was no time. All he could do was prepare for a fight. Little Bear looked the great bear in the eye. Suddenly, the bear turned and did something that Little Bear recognized as part of a game he had not played since being a boy. It was Big Bear! The two renewed their friendship and had many more adventures together.

There are many stories about of the great friendship between Big Bear and Little Bear and all of their travels together. These stories are known throughout the land and are told at all of the people’s gatherings. Their story of friendship is so powerful, that it even reached the great spirit of all things. God saw and approved and wanted to make a symbol of their story. He wrote their names across our night sky. To this day, their names are *still* written there. We know them as Ursa Major, meaning Big Bear, and Ursa Minor, meaning Little Bear. These are of course known to us as the Big Dipper and the Little

Dipper. What greater symbol of friendship between man and the power of nature could God have created? These are two symbols that help all of mankind to find their way around the globe!

The North Star District has many connections with Indian tribes. One of these is that medicine men know well the ways of bears. They know that when powerful bears scratch trees to mark their territory, sometimes the bark will pull a claw out. (Show the bear claws to the boys) Medicine men go to these marked trees and dig out those bear claws. He then gives some of the claws to the great North Star District so we can award them to our young men who have gone beyond the call of what is required in scouting.

The young men who are now gathered before me have not only completed 12 achievements in order to earn their Bear Badge, but they have completed **all 24 achievements possible**. Going beyond what is required has earned them the Bear Claw which we gladly award to each of them tonight.

Congratulations!