

Dream Catchers: Myths and History

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The Ojibwa people strongly believe in the myths and legends that make up their spiritual and cultural life. A significant part of the Ojibwa's spiritual life is the dreamcatcher. Although the exact genesis of this intriguing artifact is unknown, there are many beautiful and lyrical legends that reflect the dreamcatcher's beginnings.

The dreamcatcher is a web-like structure built into a circular frame. Beauty is derived in the dreamcatcher through the symmetry of natural accents. The frame is often made from fresh tender wood that is bent to form a hoop or circle into which a web is then woven. The web is often made of deer sinew or colored thread. Often the webs are 'spun' with a hole in the center and decorated with stones or feathers or other natural materials. The Ojibwa believe that the dreamcatcher will serve throughout one's life as an invitation for good dreams to come to rest with the sleeper, as well as the fortification against nightmares and evil spirits. The good dreams flow through the web and into the dreamer, while the bad dreams and evil spirits are caught in the strands of the web and never reach the dreamer.

One of the Ojibwa legends about the creation of the dreamcatcher suggests that the dreamcatcher was a gift from a spider to the Ojibwa people, in return for a favor an Ojibwa once did for the spider. This theme, among many others, is carried throughout this gorgeously illustrated book that charts the development of this living legend through the combination of photography and text. The Ojibwa of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Regions share a related history with many of their sister Algonquin tribes who can be found throughout the United States and Canada. The Ojibwa have introduced the dreamcatcher and its legends to the rest of the world as a living artifact of Native culture. Throughout history, the interaction between Ojibwa and other Native tribes has taught European settlers about the elusive boundary between the spiritual world, that is the world of consciousness and the world of dreams.

Featured are more than 30 color photographs of contemporary dreamcatchers created by Native people with informative captions that identify and comment on the different patterns and their significance.



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