Nanih Waiya
Located in Winston County, Mississippi, this ancient earthwork mound was part of a state park for most of the twentieth century. But in 2006 the state formally returned control of the site to the Mississippi band of Choctaw Indians.

Nanih Waiya

(The Choctaw Creation Legend)

A very long time ago, the first creation of man was in Nanih Waiya, and there they were made and there they came forth. The Muskogees[1] first came out of Nanih Waiya, and then they sunned themselves on the earthen rampart, and when they got dry they went to the east. On this (the west) side of the Tombigbee river,[2] there they rested and as they were smoking tobacco, they dropped some fire.

The Cherokee[3] next came out of Nanih Waiya. And they sunned themselves on the earthen rampart, and when they were dry they went and followed the trail of the elder tribe, the Muskogees. And at the place where the Muskogees had stopped and rested, and where they had smoked tobacco, there was fire and the woods were burnt, and the Cherokee could not find the Muskogees' trail, so they got lost and turned aside and went towards the north, and there towards the north they settled and made a people.

1. **Muskogees:** Members of a powerful tribe that occupied portions of present-day Georgia, Florida, and Alabama and formed the nucleus of the Creek Confederacy.
2. **Tombigbee river:** A tributary of the Mobile River that flows from northeastern Mississippi through southwestern Alabama.
3. **Cherokee:** Members of a tribe that occupied the hills and valleys of the southern Appalachian Mountains

The Chickasaws[4] third came out of Nanih Waiya. And then they sunned themselves on the earthen rampart, and when they got dry went and followed the Cherokee trail, and when they got to where the Cherokee had settled and made a people, they settled and made a people close to the Cherokee.

The Choctaws fourth and last came out of Nanih Waiya. And they then sunned themselves on the earthen rampart and when they got dry, they did not go anywhere, but settled down in this very land and it is the home of the Choctaw People.

[1994]

4. **Chickasaws:** Members of a tribe that occupied portions of present-day Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee.

Potawatomi

The Ojibwa (Chippewa), the Odawa (Ottawa), and the Potawatomi formed what was called the Three Fires Alliance. Members of the closely related tribes spoke dialects of the Algonkian language, and the Potawatomi derived their name from an Ojibwa term, *potawatomink*, meaning "people of the place of fire," a reference to their role as the preservers of the council fire for the Alliance. The three tribes migrated together from the northeast to the eastern shore of Lake Huron around 1400, probably because of climate changes that made winters longer and colder in North America. The Potawatomi were driven farther west during what became known as the Beaver Wars of the seventeenth century, a series of bloody conflicts over control of the furtrade fought between the French-backed tribes of the Great Lakes region and the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, supported by the Dutch and English. The Potawatomi first settled in the Door Peninsula of Wisconsin, where they adopted agricultural practices from neighboring tribes, and later moved south along the western shore of Lake Michigan. By the end of the eighteenth century the numerous bands of the decentralized tribe were divided into three geographical groups: the Forest Potawatomi of northern Wisconsin; the Prairie Potawatomi, in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois; and the Potawatomi of the Woods, in southern Michigan and northern Indiana.

Following the American Revolution, the Potawatomi struggled to retain their lands along the shores of Lake Michigan. Potawatomi warriors fought in Tecumseh's War (1811–12), the decisive conflict between the United States and the Indian confederacy led by the Shawnee chief Tecumseh. His death during the War of 1812, when the confederacy was allied with the British, effectively marked the end of Indian resistance throughout the Midwest and Ohio Valley. During the following two decades, the Potawatomi were forced to cede or to abandon their claims to extensive tracts of land, leaving them confined to a series of reservations. Finally, after

"Potawotomi Life Ways"

This named exhibit at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma, is a reconstruction of a portion of a village consisting of an animal-hide station (at left); a cooking area; and a wigwam, the traditional Potawatomi dwelling.

passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830, the Prairie Potawatomi and the Potawatomi of the Woods were forcibly removed to lands west of the Mississippi River. Today the tribe numbers roughly 28,000 members, with active bands in Canada, where many tribal members fled during the removal, and in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Oklahoma.

Reading "The Creation of the World" (Potawatomi). The following story was told by Wapuka, "Watching of the Bald Eagle," a member of the Wabash band of the Prairie Potawatomi who died in Oklahoma in 1924. A graduate of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a boarding school in Pennsylvania designed to assimilate Native Americans, Wapuka converted to Christianity but later embraced the traditional beliefs of his forefathers. His mastery of numerous Indian dialects and his knowledge of tribal lore proved invaluable to scholars such as Alanson B. Skinner, the curator of anthropology at the Milwaukee Public Museum. Although this version of the Potawatomi creation story opens with an echo of the book of Exodus, Wapuka's emphasis on the generosity of animals and their central role in the creation bears little resemblance to the account in the Christian Bible. The text is taken from *Wisconsin Indian Literature: An Anthology of Native Voices*, edited by Kathleen Tigerman (2006).

The Creation of the World

In the beginning there was nothing but water everywhere. No land could be seen. On the waves there floated a canoe, and a man sat in it and wept for he had no idea what his fate would be. At length a muskrat clambered up on the canoe and said, "Hau,[1] grandfather! What are you crying for?"

"Oh!" answered the man, "I have been here a long time, and I cannot find any land."

"But there is earth under all this water," replied the muskrat.

"Can you get me some?" asked the man.

"Yes," replied the animal, and he dove down and came up again with both paws full of mud. He dived again and brought up a ball of earth in his mouth.

"Are you all alone?" asked the man.

"No," answered the muskrat, and he called up to the canoe several aquatic animal chiefs. The first to come was a white muskrat.

"I hear that you want to see us," he said to the man.

"Yes, I want you to bring me some earth so I can make the world, and I will also create on it a good place for you to stay."

"Hau," replied the animals, "We will start at once."

So they all began to dive, and the beaver came and helped them also. They saw their grandfather kneading the mud that they brought to him and molding it into a long column that reached from the surface to the bottom of the water. It projected above the waves, and he kept adding to it. They kept on day after day, until it was finally solid. At last there was considerable space there. It was big enough to walk on. Then the man planted a great tree there. He still added to his island.

As the man worked on the north end of the island, he noticed in traveling back and forth that the ground grew dry and dusty. He asked his animal helpers how they liked what he had made, and they told him it was a good place to sun themselves. He told them to persevere in bringing him earth, and he would make it still better. Thus he kept on, until the world was completed. Then he told his animal friends that it would be covered with green grass and trees. He took a stick and marked out where he wanted the rivers to run, and then he had the muskrats dig out the channels.

At last the man built a wigwam. When he had it ready the muskrats were close by in a lake, so he went over and planted rushes along the shore for their benefit. Then he got into his canoe and paddled out into the ocean, and called on the muskrats to help him again while he built another world. He built it up until it met the first one.

"Now," he said, "I have it the way that I want it."

One day he walked up to the north end of his island and found some people there. He approached them and inquired of them where they came from and when. They were the Potawatomi, and they asked in their turn who he was.

"I am Wi'saka," he replied.

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1. **Hau:** Hello or greetings.

"Well, we have heard of you; you must have come from above, as we did."

"No," answered Wi'saka, "I have always been here, and I made this earth and all that you can see on it."

"Well," said one, "This must be the Great Spirit."

"Yes," answered Wi'saka, "That is who I am. Who can do any more than I have?"

"But, if you are the Great Spirit, why didn't you put us here?"

"You came too soon, there were others to precede you," he said to them, and they believed, and asked him what he ate. Wi'saka told them that he lived upon muskrats and he ordered the muskrats to dive into the lake and fetch him yakepin roots.[2] When he had plenty he told them to stop, and then he gave the roots to the Indians. They camped beside his lodge and he lent them his cooking utensils. He showed them how to make clay kettles and how to cook their food.

Wi'saka likewise showed the people the forest he had made, and in the woods he showed them how to peel bark and make household utensils. He showed them how to make string to tie their lodge poles together. He instructed them how to gather and prepare reeds to weave mats, and how to make rush-mat wigwams. The next day he told them that there would be animals in the world, and at his command deer, buffalo, and other game appeared.

[2006]

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2. **yakepin roots:** Unidentified plant roots.

Lakota

The Lakota are part of what became known as the Sioux Nation, a confederacy of three large groups of native peoples of the same linguistic stock – the Dakota (Santee or Eastern Sioux), Lakota (Teton Sioux), and Nakota (Yankton Sioux). Those peoples are further divided into smaller tribal groups, such as the Oglala of the Lakota. When the French encountered these peoples, whose own names mean allies or friends, they called them collectively the "Sioux." They originally lived south of Lake Superior in present-day northern Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota, but conflicts with the neighboring Ojibwa forced the Sioux westward during the seventeenth century. The Dakota settled in what is now southern and western Minnesota, where they retained their agricultural way of life. But the Lakota and the Nakota moved farther north and west into present-day North and South Dakota, western Nebraska, and eastern Wyoming, where they became nomadic hunters of buffalo and other large game. By 1750, there were probably 30,000 Sioux, half of them Lakota. Allies of the British in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the Sioux in 1825 signed a treaty with the United States under the terms of which they were granted possession of the "Great Sioux Reservation," a vast territory including much of present-day Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Wyoming.

Under the terms of a series of later treaties, however, the Sioux were steadily forced to sell or yield their lands to the federal government. They were further displaced by the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered white settlers free title to 160 acres of "public domain" land in the West. During the next thirty years, as hundreds of thousands of farms were established on the Great Plains, the Lakota struggled to survive and maintain their way of life in the Black Hills, a section of South Dakota west of the Missouri River, which they were granted in perpetuity by the Fort Laramie

Sitting Bull

This autographed photo of the Lakota chief holding a pipe, the sacred emblem of the Great Sioux Nation, was taken in 1884, five years before their once-vast lands were reduced to a handful of reservations with defined boundaries by an act of Congress.