



NATIVE AMERICAN TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS
GARY ROBINSON
7th GENERATION



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Native American Twelve Days of Christmas

Adapted & Written by
Gary Robinson



Illustrations by
Jesse T. Hummingbird

ADVANCED READING MATERIAL



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Summertown, Tennessee

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INTRODUCTION

The beloved traditional English Christmas carol, The Twelve Days of Christmas, has been adapted here to reflect aspects of the richly varied cultures and traditions of twelve Native American cultural groups from different parts of the U.S. Author Gary Robinson presents a cultural background for each day's gift in an easy-to-understand manner, placing the adapted song lyrics in the context of these tribal cultures. Illustrator Jesse T. Hummingbird has again imaginatively translated Robinson's text into stunning visuals that stir the imagination. This book is a wonderful companion to Robinson and Hummingbird's best-selling Native American Night Before Christmas.

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



A Blanket for My Tipi

In early times before Europeans arrived, American Indians of the Plains such as the Lakota used deerskins and buffalo robes for clothing and for warmth. Later, these tribes traded with European traders and settlers for woolen blankets that had been made for trading just to Native Americans. Tipis are the traditional homes for many nomadic plains tribes that traveled from place to place in search of food. Today, Indian trade blankets are still prized by Native peoples.



On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Two Moccasins

Moccasins are made in different styles by different tribes, usually from deerskin or other animal hides. The moccasins shown here are the type made and worn by the Apache who live in New Mexico and Arizona. These moccasins protect the feet and lower part of the legs from cactus and the rough lands of the desert Southwest.



On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Three Beaded Bags

Several eastern woodland tribes used over-the-shoulder leather bags to hold food or trade goods on long journeys. These bags were often decorated with beads obtained in trade from European settlers. The Delaware Indians are particularly well known for their floral-designed beaded bags, such as the ones shown here, which are still made by a few Native artists.



On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Four Ribbon Shirts

Like their Indian brothers on the Plains, Cherokee Indians of the Southeastern United States originally made clothing from animal skins. When they started trading with Europeans for cloth, the Cherokee developed quick and easy ways to make shirts and dresses, including men's shirts decorated with ribbons. Many American Indian men still wear ribbon shirts for special occasions.



On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Five Turquoise Rings

For many tribes of the Southwest such as the Pueblo Indians, turquoise is known as the “sky stone” and is a symbol for the sky. It is used to make many different kinds of beautiful jewelry worn by American Indian people today and is collected by non-Indians around the world.



On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Six Singers Singing

Native American powwows are held throughout the year as a multi-tribal celebration. Many different styles of clothing and dancing can be seen at these colorful events. At the center of it all is the drum, which is believed to be the heart of the people. A group of singers sit around the drum and provide the songs and the beat for the dancers to dance to.



On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .

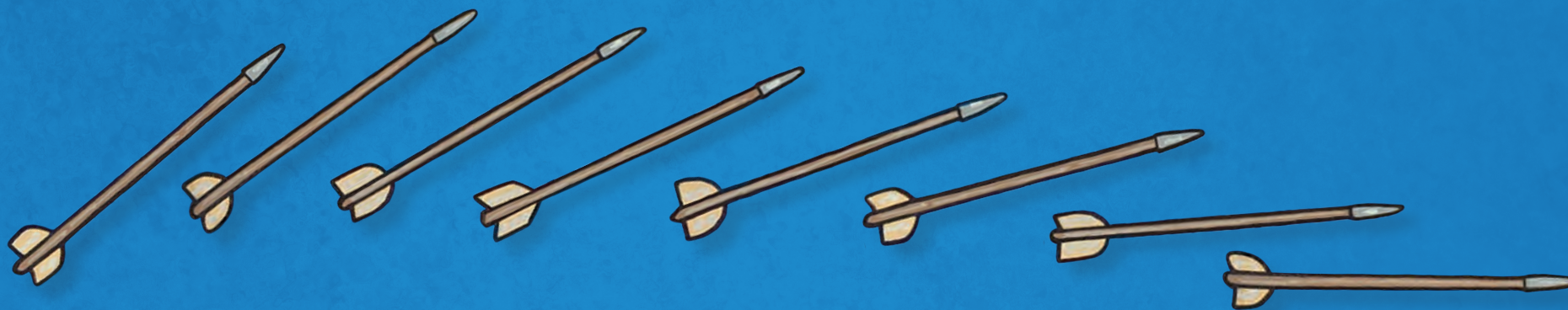


Seven Salmon Swimming

Salmon are unique fish. They live most of their lives in the ocean, but when it's time to have babies, they swim miles and miles up rivers, against the current, until they reach the place where they were born. There the females spawn—laying their eggs and protecting them until they hatch. These fish have been a traditional food for the tribes of the Pacific Northwest for thousands of years. The totem and fish carvings shown here reflect the artistic styles of the Native peoples of this region.



On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Eight Archers Aiming

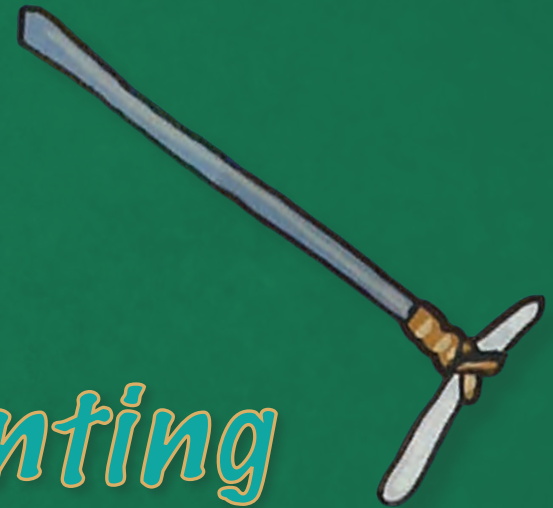
Traditionally, Native peoples all over America used the bow and arrow for hunting and warfare. Bows come in many different sizes and styles, developed by tribes living in a wide variety of environments: grassy plains, dense forest, rough mountains, and dry deserts. Today, some American Indian people still shoot bows and arrows for hunting and competition.



On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Nine Planters Planting



Not all tribes were nomadic. Some lived in traditional villages and grew many kinds of crops for food. American Indians living in the Northeastern United States learned the best ways to grow foods such as corn, beans, and squash. These three vegetables, when eaten together, provide the same quality of protein found in meat. Some Northeastern tribes taught the early Pilgrims how to grow these crops, which kept the English settlers from starving to death.





On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .

Ten Dancers Dancing

Dancing for social events and ceremonies is important to all tribal people. The Powwow has become the most common event among tribal communities for Native Americans of all ages to compete in a variety of dance categories. These include Men's Traditional, Grass and Fancy dances, and Women's Jingle Dress, Straight and Fancy dances. Powwow dance styles originated from traditional Plains Indian dances.



On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Eleven Eagles Soaring

Most Native Americans believe that eagles are sacred birds who live close to the upper world of the Creator and may carry messages from that world to ours. Because of this, eagle feathers are considered sacred objects that are used in many Native American ceremonies.



On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .

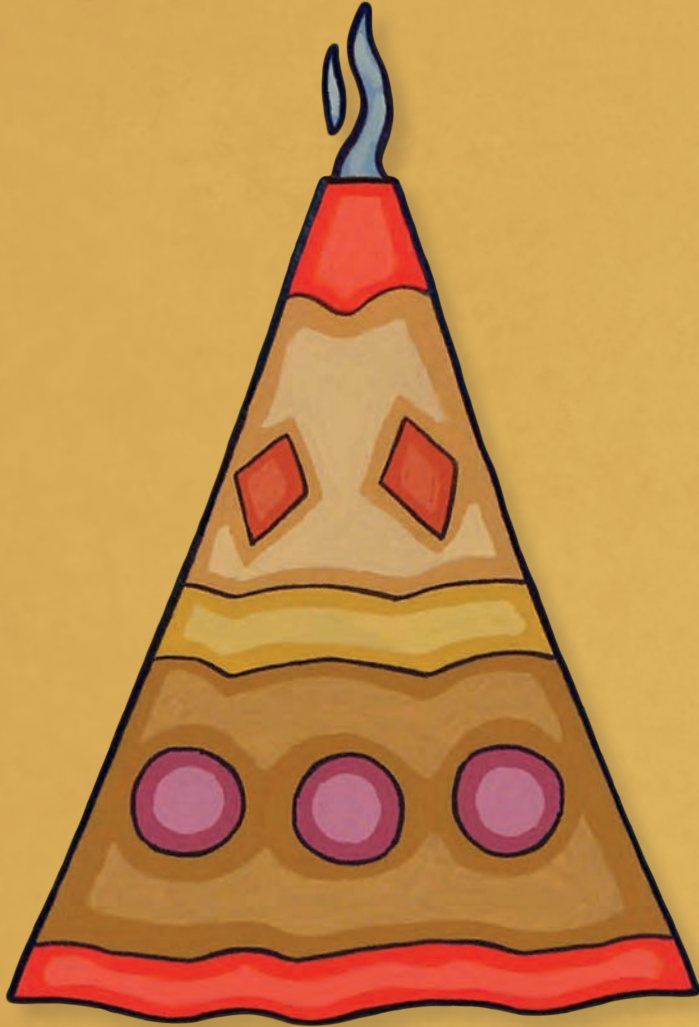


Twelve Weavers Weaving

Many tribes are known for various kinds of weaving. Materials such as plant fibers are used in basket weaving, and woolen yarns are used in finger weaving or in rugs woven on looms. It is usually women who make these beautiful objects, and they in turn pass the art of weaving on to their daughters. Because of their strength and beautiful designs, Chumash baskets such as the ones pictured here are some of the most famous and can be seen in museums around the world.



On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



*A Blanket for My Tipi
Two Moccasins
Three Beaded Bags
Four Ribbon Shirts
Five Turquoise Rings
Six Singers Singing
Seven Salmon Swimming
Eight Archers Aiming
Nine Planters Planting
Ten Dancers Dancing
Eleven Eagles Soaring
Twelve Weavers Weaving*



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Robinson is a seasoned writer/author, filmmaker and digital photographic artist of Choctaw and Cherokee Indian descent with experience in many aspects of television production and both fiction and non-fiction writing.

Much of his work has been about or on behalf of American Indian tribes, organizations and businesses, creating documentaries, informational video programs, books and educational materials on the histories, cultures and contemporary issues of indigenous peoples. Since 2015, he has done intensive research, writing and publication on the topic of California History from a Native American perspective.

His 2019 teen novel, *Standing Strong*, about a suicidal Native teen girl whose life is transformed when she takes part in an oil pipeline protest to protect sacred Native land and water, won the 2019 Moonbeam Children's Book Gold Award for Fiction/Mature Issues and was named one of the Best Books of 2019 by American Indians in Children's Literature.

Over the years, he has written, produced, directed, shot and/or edited more than 100 video/television programs for and about American Indian people and published eighteen Native American books. He earned a B.A. in Film Production and an M.A. in educational media from the University of Texas in Austin. He currently lives in central California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jesse Hummingbird (1952-2021) Honored nationally by many in the world of art and recognized by his Cherokee tribe as a cultural treasure, Jesse Hummingbird was loved by all who knew him, and deservedly so. The depth of his giving soul was apparent to anyone who worked with him or interacted with him however briefly.

Born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, this $\frac{3}{4}$ Cherokee became a fulltime artist in the early 1980s, using a traditional “flat-style” made famous by earlier Native Oklahoma artists. Through the years, Jesse won the hearts of art collectors all over the United States and won awards from multiple art museums, markets and shows.

In 2015, Jesse was named a Tribal Elder by the Cherokee Nation, and in 2017, a National Treasure, an honor given by the tribe to those who are helping keep Cherokee art and culture alive.

“People who met Jesse at one of his art shows remember his smile, laugh, stories and easy way of talking to them . . . sometimes forgetting to try to sell them something!” Sandy said of her husband. “Artists and friends admired his work and respected him for staying true to his art and his Cherokee roots. He is remembered for his willingness to always help someone in need . . . sometimes without their asking for it. He will be missed by all who knew him.”

—Gary Robinson