

Long ago, when Iktomi still roamed the earth, we lived in a permanent camp. It was a time when the people grew to love dancing and celebrating. Then one day, the people stopped and didn't have the desire to celebrate any longer; and from that point, during a celebration the people did nothing.

At one of these celebrations a man stepped into the arbor and scolded the people for not dancing. He said, "Why is it that you do not celebrate or dance, though the relatives have come standing here wanting to watch the dance? Now then, I am about to speak so that you may know who I am. Among the people, ikce wicasa, wherever there are woods, if my voice comes forth, just the sound of it causes fear in men, people move to avoid me," he said.

It was the Owl who proclaimed this and that he counted coup.

And soon a small man stepped into the arbor and said, "Why is it that you do not celebrate or dance, though the relatives have come standing here wanting to watch you dance? My friend has just told of his bravery and so I shall tell you of mine," he said. "Throughout the day I looked for food for myself, when two men met me face to face without warning and would have used sticks on me, but I made repeated attacks on them chasing them away, and I reentered my lodge and so now I live!"

And this was the Badger who told this story.

These two spoke in vain because the people still sat unaffected. Soon, a tall man with black eyes walked into the arbor. All over his body he had painted himself black, with a small white line drawn upon him. With eyes of hate he looked at the crowd of dancers and said, "Why don't you dance, though relatives who stay in permanent villages have come to watch the celebration? My two friends have counted coup and so I will speak next. Throughout the day while I was picking medicine, two enemy came at me suddenly and would have killed me, but I suddenly stopped short and sent my power into their eyes and then I ran into the brush, and so I remain alive."

And the elders of long ago said it was the Skunk who said this, but still the dancers were not impressed.

And so, a man who was painted white and wore two eagle feathers of equal size and beauty set upright on the back of his head stepped into the arbor. The feathers were white with black on the tips, and he stood up along with his friend and said, "My three friends have told of their power, and so now I will. The people, using dogs to haul their burdens, were traveling north when they came upon me all of a sudden where I lay under a sage bush; and so, as if out from their bellies, I jumped forward. All of them, even the old, chased me and those with bows shot at me. But because of my power I was untouched, and now I stand here today before you."

And they said it was the Rabbit who said this, but still they did not dance.

Then a man who painted himself grey stepped into the arbor with three of his brothers. And they say they were all alike in appearance. Each movement they made brought a buzzing sound.

"Why is it that you do not dance, though relatives have come to see the celebration? Four of my friends have counted coup, and so it is my turn to speak. The people were traveling and stopped to do ceremony, and right in front of them I flew up and all those with bows let fly arrows at me. But they did not strike me, except one which had hit my back, breaking the bone, and so I lay suffering under some brush, praying, until the meat of my back wasted away when the arrow fell out, which is why I am bony there."

They say it was the Prairie Chicken who said this but still the people refused to dance.

Finally a tall man, painted black, carrying a load of arrows on his back, walked up and said, "I was the first to get here and yet somehow I am the last to stand before you as we listened to the

war stories told by our brothers. Why is it that you do not celebrate, though your relatives have come to watch you dance? Right now I will tell you my story.”

And so he said, “The people were going north, and from their tribe all the boys got together. And as I was laying down by the forest on the hillside, all through out the day, they shot arrows into me and only when they ran out of arrows did they leave me alone. So there I was, with arrows all about me; and when I was healed I put these arrows upon my back and brought them here to this gathering. And so I stand before you now.”

They said it was the Buffalo who spoke of this.

All six of these warriors counted coup and told of their stories, but they all failed to reach the minds of the dancers.

At once, all these warriors – the Owl, Skunk, Prairie Chicken, Rabbit with his brother the Red Fox, Badger and Buffalo called a meeting.

The Buffalo, who spoke first, said “Our people do not wish to dance or celebrate, they have lost their pride and hope. We must bring their hearts back into this circle and bring them out of their misery. We must create societies among them so that we can bring their honor back!

The Buffalo will be the spirit that sits over these societies, beginning with the Chiefs society, and only Chiefs will be members of it. They will use their wisdom among the people and their word will be followed.” And since that time, the Chief’s society was created.

The Buffalo then said, “The Chiefs will be together in a group made up of all our bands. They will lead the people and direct their movements; they will instruct and command the Akicita (Warriors) to watch over the camp so, in this way, no evil will develop. Through their visions, feasts and songs the people will be caused to celebrate and, from this day, no more will our people live in misery. And wherever that these Chiefs societies are, there will be an Owl to act as a lookout so as to cause happiness. These things will only be when the people receive their visions through the great spirit, and through this they can live without misery.”

After making his announcement the Buffalo sat by and the Badger spoke. “It is wrong that our people live in misery, so now among them a new society will exist where the Badger is their spirit, that they pray with.

They will be soldiers and scouts, and I will assist them. They will use my power, but it will only be if they have a vision through the Great Spirit and receive knowledge and understanding.

Wherever they gather, there will be an Owl in their company.” And so, the Badger society was created.

After this the Red Fox Spoke, he always stood by his brother the Rabbit, but Rabbit stayed quite this time. “It is wrong that our people live in misery, so now among them a new society will exist and only through visions from the Great Spirit shall they have membership. The rabbit will be their power and all the members will be Akicita, and theirs will be scouting duty, and through them they will have the strength, bravery and power of the wild dog through dreams.” It is from this that the Dog soldier and Fox society were created.

Another man stood up with black eyes and said. “It is wrong that our people live in misery, so now among them a new society will exist, and through this society the people will be entertained and through them, without causing trouble, they will discipline. The Skunk will be their power and the members will keep a Crow. They will have the knowledge and cunning of the Skunk and because they will be fearfully armed, the people will submit to obedience. But this will only be when the members receive their knowledge through visions through which the Great Spirit will speak.” It is from this that the Crow Keepers society exists, and wherever these members gather, the voice of the Owl will be heard.

And so another man stood up and he said. "It is wrong that our people live in misery, so now among them a new society will exist and here the Prairie Chicken will be the spirit. Men will imitate the sound and dance of the Prairie Chicken when they celebrate; and so they will dance with buzzing rattles like the buzzing sound of the Prairie Chicken's tail when he takes off in flight, and these Akicita (Warriors) will be under the direction of the Chiefs Society. Whenever they gather, an Owl will call out for them. Only brave men will be members and they will be called the Braves."

Finally the sixth man stood up, the Owl and said.

"It is unnatural that our people live in misery, so now a new society will exist among them. And so the Owl Feather Headdress society will be included, as it is of ancient origin, the oldest of societies, and only men of old age will be members and they will make feasts and dance and call council to discuss tribal matters with each other and through their wisdom they will make decisions for the young men of the tribe. Whatever they decide in the tribe will be law and their judgement will be right, and all the Akicita will act in accordance with their law. And wherever they gather, an Owl will use its voice to the people.

But it will be so that only through visions from the Great Spirit this can be."

And so they say that the animals created these societies; and so, when men seek wisdom and understanding, it will be through visions where certain men will see their role to become a member of these societies.

The first one was the Chiefs society, created by the Buffalo who is their spirit that they pray with. Their role is as an advisory council and never acting as scouts; they are the thinkers of the tribe.

The second is the Badger. They first devised their order and from this, men created this society and so they lived as the badger had instructed.

The third were the Foxes and they had two spirits, the Fox and the Rabbit, but the Rabbit is the one that they prayed with, as the Fox had said.

The fourth were the Crow Keepers, and they had the Skunk as their power. Whenever they dressed for ceremony they wore a Skunk skin on them to honor this spirit.

The fifth were the Braves which was created by the Prairie Chicken. They did some of the scouting and policing responsibilities.

The sixth was created by the Owl and the members were called the Owl Feather Headdress society, which later became the Mandan society or Miwatani. They were elder men and never were active as warriors. Instead, at gatherings and events they were respected in the same manner as the Chiefs society. But the Chiefs society were composed of men who were already leaders and held the highest position within the tribe. The original members consisted of twelve, but later on increased with more members.

This happened long ago, when human beings were new to the earth, and it was because the tribe was in misery and without pride that these relatives, who wanted to see a celebration and could not, that these men took action.

And so it is said that these who were without pride and were in misery lived in a permanent camp, and were known as the Prairie Dog nation because they are people who dwell in only one place and never move.

And so, even today it is true that wherever there is a Prairie Dog town, there is an Owl whose job it is to call out for them.

Whenever one member of this nation wishes to display his bravery he comes out of his lodge and, without a thought, he darts out to another lodge or hole to pay a visit to one of his relatives,

even though there is danger all around. And when he arrives safely, then the Owl screams “li li li li li...!!” at the top of his lungs to honor the brave one.

And so in this way, the Owl lives in various Prairie Dog camps making their nation happy and energetic. And so in the same way, wherever there is a society meeting and coups are counted, the women give this same cry to praise their men