

A LESSON FROM THE FOREST

(Lenape)

By: Wak' Teme

One summer day, Running Tree and his Grandfather were walking through the forest. As they walked the well worn trail, Running Tree was looking at everything except where he was going. All of a sudden, he stepped on a rock which was unbalanced, and stumbled and fell. He got up and brushed himself off, only to run directly into a large spider web stretched across the trail. "Yuk", he exclaimed. "this web is in my eyes and hair." "Grandfather, can you help me get it off?" His Grandfather chuckled and said, "Come here my son, and I will help. It looks like the Wematekan'is know now just how much you weigh and what you look like." "How so, Grandfather, what makes you say this?" asked Running Tree. "Who are the Wematekani'is, and why would they want to know how much I weigh and what I look like?" "Sit down my son, here in the shade, and I will give you a lesson from the forest," replied his Grandfather, "something very few people know and understand."

"The forest is a very important and sacred place. It was placed under the care of the Mesinghalikun by Creator himself. The Mesinghalikun is the guardian of the forest, and protector of all who love and respect Mother Earth. However, since he cannot be every place at one time, he appointed the Wematekan'is as custodians of the forest, and they report back to him regularly." "Grandfather, can we see these Wematekan'is, who are they, and where do they live?" Running Tree asked. "Not often does anyone ever see the Wematekan'is," his Grandfather replied. "They are the Little People, and they live under ground, not far below the surface. Sometimes if one's heart is right, they can be seen, but not often, as there is no need, since all the plants and animals assist them in their task." "Under the ground," continued his Grandfather, "is a vast network of roots and rootlets. These are all interconnected, and monitored by a group of highly trained Wematekan'is, who are able to evaluate all the data as it comes in from the various sources. Each bush you brush against or each tree branch you touch, sends an impulse deep into the earth, through processing units to the vast data banks which are located there. From this information, the Wematekan'is are able to gain essential information on every traveler that enters the forest. They are able to determine your location, your height, and even how fast you are traveling. "Weighing rocks" just like the one you stumbled on, are set up along the trail to record weights. Spider webs, just like the one we removed from your face are placed to give a facial imprint, or sometimes an actual image of your body type.

Sometimes if they are looking for someone special, mosquitoes are sent out to take blood samples, so they can compare them with records stored in the data banks.”

“Grandfather, this is really something important to know!” Running Tree exclaimed.

“I never even thought about something like this, as I walked through the forest.”

“In addition,” his Grandfather continued, “over there along the trail, you will see the Jack-in-the-pulpits. These are listening posts, as within each is a very highly sophisticated microphone with directional hoods and from these, every word said from shouts to whispers are heard. As a matter of fact, if you ever want to send a message to the Wematekan’is, all you have to do is speak into one of these special flowers, and they will get your message.”

“And so my grandson, as you can see, the forest is a very important place and well looked after and protected. This way, the Mesinghalikun can be kept aware of what is happening and able to fulfill the position that Creator placed him responsible for.” his Grandfather continued. “And now it is time to go home..Grandmother should have supper nearly ready for us, and we must hurry. It is not good to keep your Grandmother waiting.”

Running Tree jumped up, and started down the trail at his Grandfather’s side. “Wait once, Grandfather,” he said, as he ran over to the side of the path. Leaning over one of the Jack-in-the-pulpits, he said. “Wanishi Mesinghalikun, Wanishi Wematekan’is for helping Creator keep the forest a beautiful and safe place for the People to visit and travel through. Let me always honor and respect Mother Earth, Creator, and all placed here as part of our relation.”

