

BORN FROM CORN

The Soul of the Americas



Prepared for :
6th Grade Teachers
in the state of Utah



Artes de Mexico en Utah

We hope to increase cultural understanding and foster deeper appreciation of the main agricultural crops, traditions and knowledge of various Native American groups.



Born from Corn Lessons - 6th Grade



1) Born from Corn

Standard I: Students will understand how ancient civilizations developed and how they contributed to the current state of the world.

Objective 2: I can evaluate how religion has played a central role in human history from ancient times to today.

A. Explore the importance of religion in the cultural expression of ancient civilizations.

This lesson will introduce; corn as the source of life and existence for the indigenous peoples of the Americas (specifically the Maya), practices that are still present today, the Maya cosmivision and the important connection between culture, nature and sustainability.

2) Colors of Nature

Standard I: Students will understand how ancient civilizations developed and how they contributed to the current state of the world.

Objective 4: I can analyze how the earliest civilizations created technologies and systems to meet community and personal needs.

C. Identify cultural expressions that reflect these systems.

The second lesson will discuss color from an indigenous perspective (specifically the Maya). This includes literature, symbolism, murals, textiles and estella paintings. The lesson explores colors and their appearance in the Popol Vuh and the modern day process of natural pigments and dyes. Students will be able to create their own natural dyes through a STEAM activity.

3) Food, Land, Power

Standard IV: Students will understand current global issues and their rights and responsibilities in their interconnected world.

Objective 2: I can explore current global issues facing the modern world and identify potential solutions.

A. Investigate pressing issues facing the world today.

C. Identify individuals and groups making positive changes in the world today and support these choices with evidence.

This lesson explores foods that are native to the American continent, the ways food migrates from one place to another, and how the Maya grow crops through a sustainable agricultural system called "La Milpa". There is also a focus on the relationship between food and social justice for indigenous peoples and how migration changes accessibility to ancestral foods. Students will read articles and make connections between their communities and Indigenous communities.

Born from Corn

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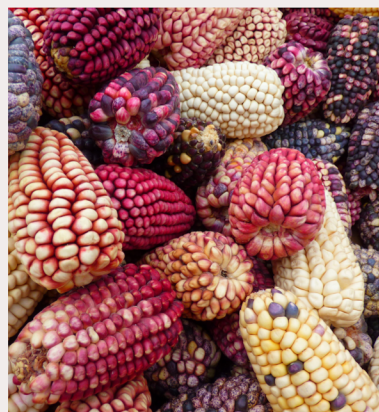


Project Description

Throughout Utah, the U.S. and indeed the Americas, clashes are occurring between Native American communities and overall communities. Much is based on a fundamental lack of understanding and knowledge of differences in history, philosophy, religion, world views, a lack of perspective of history from indigenous voices omitted in public education. A core difference is often basic beliefs as to our human relationship to nature.

This lesson will introduce educators to the importance and relationship between culture, nature and sustainability, introducing corn as the source of life and existence for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, which practices are still present today.

It is important to note that Indigenous knowledge IS scientific knowledge, this includes the the gene selection of teosinte into corn and the process of nixtamalization which is a scientific process that was ignored by Europeans as corn was taken overseas



Born from Corn

More About the Slides



Indigenous People of the Americas

It is important to know that there are many indigenous people in the American continent. Here are the indigenous nations of Mexico.

Tribal Nations of the U.S & Canada

And here are the indigenous nations of the United States and Canada.

Do you recognize any of these names?

The Term "Mayan & Indio"

Slide 10 & 11

The term "Mayan" is only used by scholars when referring to the Maya languages. The term "Maya" is used when referring to people, places, and culture, without distinction between singular or plural. Example: "It was written in Mayan."

The term "Indio or Indian" has a negative connotation in Latin America depending on who and how it is used. This map was created by Aaron Carapella and it shows the actual names of Indigenous peoples by Indigenous peoples.

More about the Maps: <http://www.tribalnationsmaps.com/>

Text: The Popol Vuh

Because of the European colonization, not many written indigenous texts survived to our current day. One text written by Maya leaders after the conquest shares incredible knowledge on Maya mythology and traditions. This text is called the Popol Vuh.

The Popol Vuh was written in the K'iche language during the 16th century.

Maya Literature

Slide 13

Many scholars have translated the Popol Vuh from its original language, this explains why there are so many variations in the narrative. It is also important to note that the Popol Vuh was **written** after colonial contact but depictions of the story have been present for thousands of years in Maya art.

Born from Corn: The Maya

Many stories in the Popol Vuh mention corn but it is also part of the creation stories of many native groups, such as the Aztecs, Cherokee, Kiowa, the Zuni, the Seminole, the Shoshone and many others.

The Maya creation story in the Popol Vuh notes that humans were made out of wood and mud but it did not work. Finally animals: fox, coyote, parakeet, and raven found corn seeds inside the mountain P'axil and gave it to creator Grandmother Xmucane, she then used the corn and made the dough in which humans were created with.

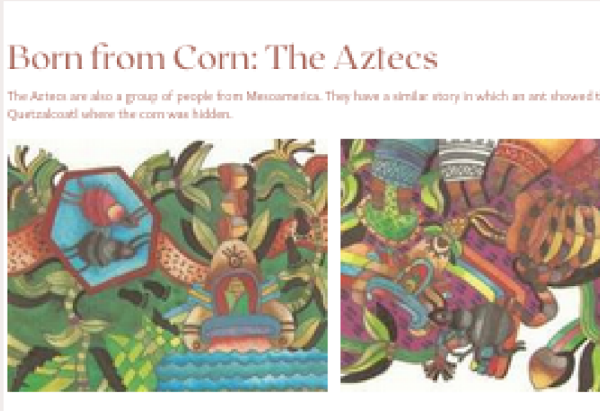
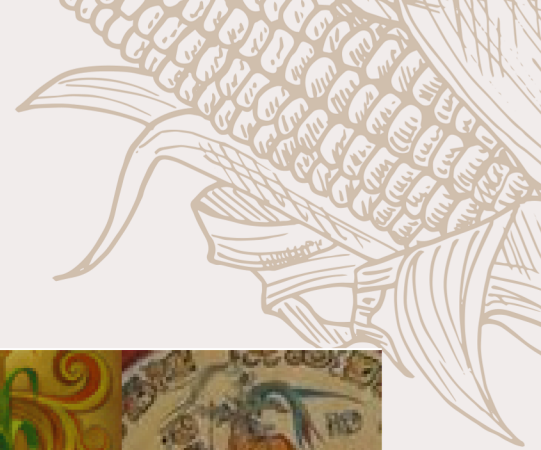
Animals in the Creations Story

Slide 14

This image can be found in the publication, "Popol Vuh, a Sacred Book of the Maya" by Victor Montejo, Luis Garay, and David Unger. The image depicts the animals involved in the creation story of the Maya Ki'che.

Born from Corn

More About the Slides



Aztec Creation Story

Slide 15

These images are from the book "La Leyenda del Maiz" by Esther Jacobo. The book gives the Aztec narrative of their creation story.



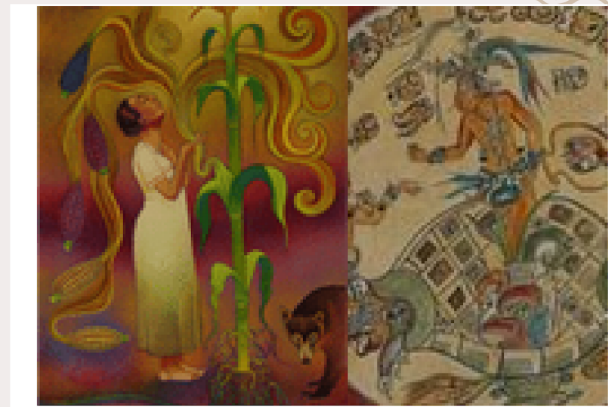
Corn Maidens

Slide 17

The image at the top is the Hopi Corn Maiden and is by Apache/Tarahumara artist, Rose of Sweet Medicine Drums.

To Support: <http://www.sweetmedicinedrums.com/handpainted.htm>

The image at the bottom is from 'The Painted Murals of San Bartolo' in Guatemala. This image shows the depiction of the Maya Maize God and the creation of the world, surrounding him you can see four kneeling corn maidens. Stories of the corn maidens have been passed on through storytelling across Mesoamerica. Some of them have been written, others haven't. But they are still being shared today.



Xmucane & the Hero Twins

Slide 16

This image can be found in the publication, "Popol Vuh, a Sacred Book of the Maya" by Victor Montejo, Luis Garay, and David Unger. The image above is of Grandmother Xmucane in front of a corn stalk as instructed by the Hero Twins. The image on the left is from a Classic Period plate (650-900 CE), it shows the Maize Deity emerging from a turtle shell, symbolic of the earth. The two men on the side are the Hero twins who provide water and other offerings as part of the ritual to give life to their deceased father.

Born from Corn

More About the Slides



Cosmovision

Slide 20

The image on this slide is of Ki'nich Janaab' Pakal, a Maya ruler of Palenque. This image is found on a large carved stone sarcophagus lid in the Temple of Inscriptions, Chiapas, México. Depictions of maize can be found in this image.



Maize - The Sustainer of Life

Slide 21

The image on this slide is from the Temple of the Foliated Cross found in Palenque, Mexico. In this image you can find motifs of maize sprouting human heads. The heads growing out of the corn stalk are the first twin brothers from the Popol Vuh.



La Milpa & The Three Sisters

Slide 26, 27, 28

The main benefit of growing a milpa is the diversity of vegetation which satisfies a nutritional balanced diet. When a Maya farmer goes to plant their corn, first they prepare the milpa, very much like the creator deity has to prepare/create the Earth. When a farmer plants the seeds of maize, it is symbolic of the Maize Deity going down to the Underworld and dying. With the proper care the plant will sprout and grow just like the Maize Deity is reborn and provides to the Maya people.

The Three Sisters story is found in Native American Indigenous groups and not in Mesoamerica.



Born from Corn

More About the Slides



Nixtamalization

Slide 30

The image on the right is from the video "What is Nixtamalization?" by CIMMYT

To watch: <https://youtu.be/TIs3gjOPevw>

Nixtamalization is a process created by indigenous people and it is a process that provides several nutritional benefits such as: the bioavailability of vitamin B3 niacin which reduces the risk of pellagra disease and increased calcium intake. It is also important to note that corn genes were selected by Indigenous people in order to domesticate teosinte into corn, teosinte is a grass native to Central Mexico.



Maya Literature

Slide 29

This particular textile is from Chiapas, Mexico. Different Maya communities wear different colors to represent their community. The iconography used in textiles can be compared to iconography used in ancient mesoamerica.



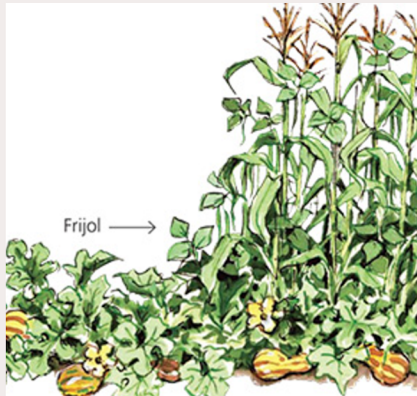
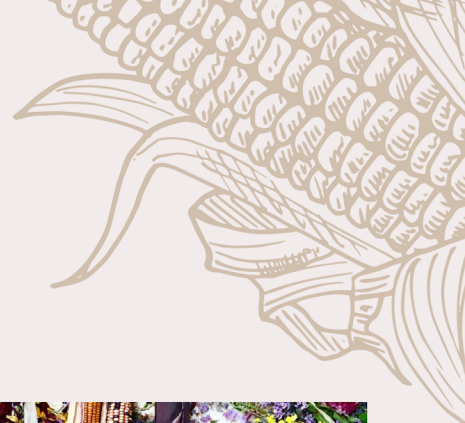
Wasatch Community Gardens

Slide 32

We have Maya people living in Utah today! In the above image Maria Elena and Josefina teach young ones how to grow a milpa at Wasatch Community Gardens!

Born from Corn

More About the Images



La Milpa

In Slide 26

"Three Sisters" garden. Illustrations by Elayne Sears from an article by Barbara Pleasant in Mother Earth News, April/May 2011.



Rosita

Slide 19

Rosita wearing her huipil (traditional Maya garment) and demonstrating the nixtamalization process.



The Harvest

Slide 19

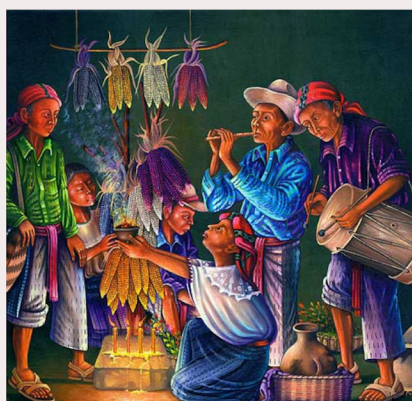
This image above demonstrates the celebration and blessing of the harvest.



Aztec Farmers

Slide 8 & 19

Aztec farmers plant and harvest maize. Images found in the Florentine Codex, Book IV written by Bernardino de Sahagún.



Pedro Rafael Gonzalez Chavajay

Slide 19

Hombres de Maiz, Ritos (Men of Corn, Rites) by Maya/Guatemalan artist, Pedro Rafael Gonzalez Chavajay



Paula Nicho Cumez

Slide 19

Corazon del Maíz (Heart of Maize) by Maya/Guatemalan artist, Paula Nicho Cumez.

Born from Corn

More About the Images



Blessing of the Seeds

Slide 19

Maria Elena preparing the Blessing of the Seeds at a Wasatch Community Gardens Event.



Maize Grinding

Slide 19

A Utah community member shows Artes de Mexico en Utah how she grinds corn with a mano and metate.



The Maize Festival

Slide 19

"The Maize Festival" by Diego Rivera, Fresco Painting, 1924.



Three Sisters

Slide 28

The Three Sisters, painting by Ernest Smith.



Laikña Ch'ol

Cover Slide

This painting, "Laikña Ch'ol" is by Darwin Cruz, a Maya Ch'ol artist from Chiapas, Mexico. The Maya Choles are dedicated to planting corn since it is the basis of food and beans.



Maize and Windmill

Cover Slide

Maize and Windmill (Dallas Nine) painted by Otis Dozier.

Born from Corn

More About the Images



The Evolution of Corn

The Evolution of Corn in the Ames, Iowa post office was painted by artist Lowell Houser. The mural was created as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal initiative. On the left section you see a Maya native cultivating green maize with an obsidian tipped hoe. On the right you see a midwestern farmer picking corn from dried ochre-tone stalks. In the middle you see maize/corn growing.



Josè Reanda Quiejù

Slide 6

The above painting by José Reanda Quiejú is called "Mi Hermanito Santiago Atitlán", "My little brother Santiago Atitlán".



Campesinos Siderales

Cover Slide

Campesinos Siderales (Peasants of the Sky) by Crow Muñoz, Mexico City Mural, 2017.



Hombres de Maíz

Cover Slide

Hombres de Maiz (Maiz People). Painting by Mario Gonzalez Chavajay



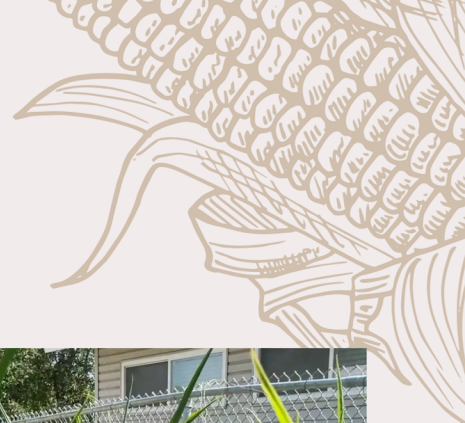
Huestec Civilization

Cover Slide

Huestec Civilization, painting by Diego Rivera.

Born from Corn

Creation and Corn Videos



The Creation Story of the Maya

Video by the Smithsonian Museum.

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb5GKmEcJcw>



Ixim: A Mayan Story about Corn

Video by Matador Network.

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WScrl_BT-Sg



Rosita's Milpa

Video by Artes de Mexico en Utah.

Watch:

<https://youtu.be/2L4WmcZqM7l>

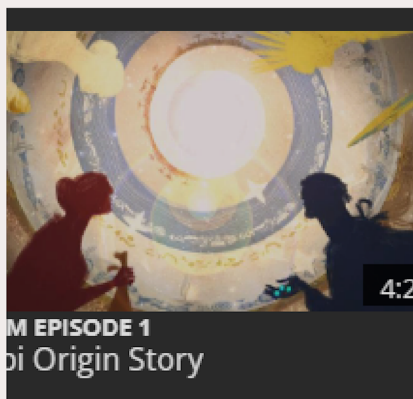


Three Sisters Planting and La Milpa

Video by Modern Gardener in partnership with Wasatch Community Gardens and Artes de Mexico en Utah.

Watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEY8omjVID8>

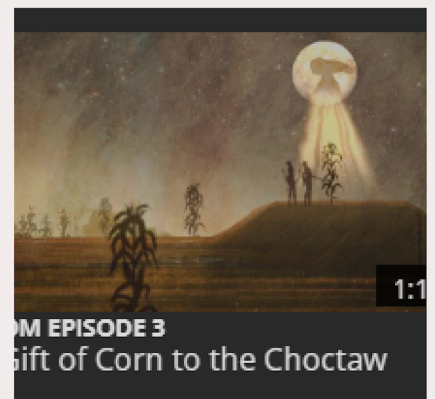


Hopi Origin Story

Video by PBS:

Watch::

<https://www.pbs.org/native-america/extras/sacred-stories/>



A Gift of Corn to the Choctaw

Video by PBS:

Watch:

<https://www.pbs.org/native-america/extras/sacred-stories/>

Born from Corn Books and More



The word Indigenous

The word Indigenous - explained, video made by CBC Kids News in Canada.

Click:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CISeEFTsgDA>



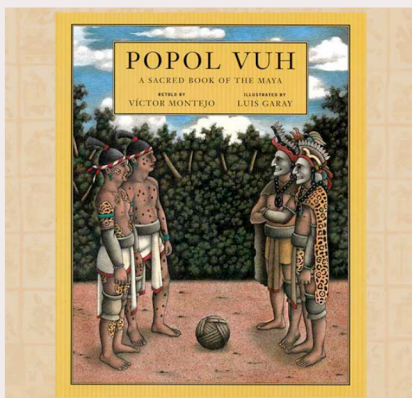
Feather Serpent and the Five Suns

Feather Serpent and the Five Suns: A Mesoamerican Creation Myth written by Duncan Tonatiuh is the story of Quetzalcóatl quest to create humankind.



Aquí Era el Paraíso

Aquí era el paraíso (Here was Paradise) is a selection of poems written by Maya poet Humberto Ak'abal. Written in Spanish, English and in Maya.



Popol Vuh: A Sacred Book of the Maya

Adapted by Victor Montejo, illustrated by Luis Garay and translated by David Unger.



Corn Stories

Many stories remind the Diné (Navajo) of their deep connection to corn and that they should always care for it.

Click to explore the Natural History Museum's collection:
<https://baskets.nhmu.utah.edu/collections/stories/corn-stories>

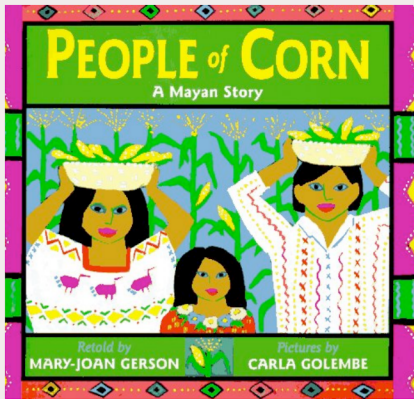


Corn Symbolism

Naadąą' (corn) is a primary staple of Diné (Navajo) life and a symbol of sustenance in Dinétah (the Diné homeland).

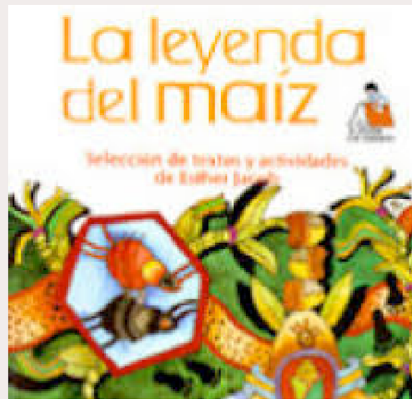
Click to explore the Natural History Museum's collection:
<https://baskets.nhmu.utah.edu/collections/symbols/corn-symbolism>

Born from Corn Books and More



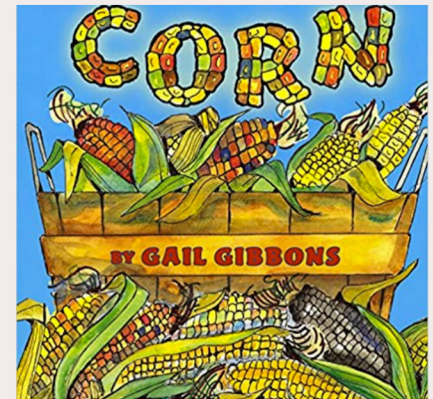
People of the Corn

By May Joan Gerson and
illustrated by Carla Golembe



La Leyenda del Maíz

By Esther Jacob and illustrated
by Jose Esteban Martinez



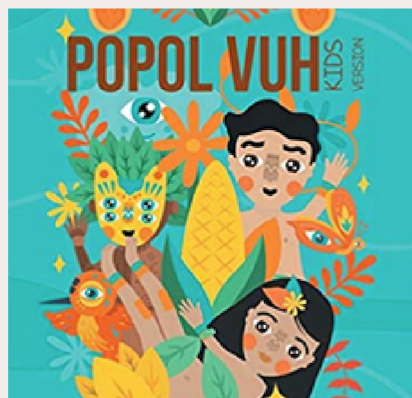
Corn

By Gail Gibbons



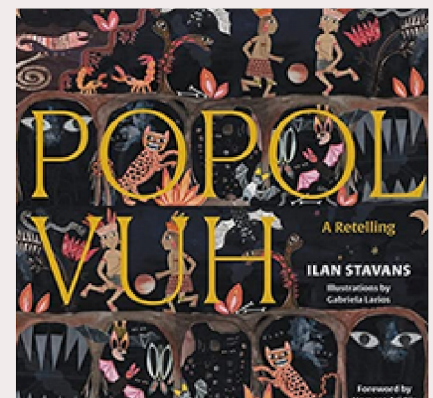
Three Stalks of Corn

By Leo Politi



Popol Vuh: Kids Version

By Irina Rohmoser Moreno



Popol Vuh

By Ilan Stavans and illustrated
by Gabriela Larios



DISCLAIMER

Out of respect for indigenous cultures, we ask that you share the following stories in a spirit of respect.

The stories were translated maintaining the same conversational style as they belong to the oral tradition of Storytelling. They are meant to be recounted, not just read.

This collection was compiled and translated for educational purposes only.

You may copy it for educational use only.

You cannot sell it individually or as part of a package.



THE MAIDEN OF THE MILPA

El mundo tzeltal parece bastante similar al de sus otros hermanos mayas. Está constituido por un cosmos (chul chan), la madre tierra (lum balumilal o ch'ul balumilal) y el inframundo (k'atimbak). El equilibrio y la armonía entre estos tres espacios es premiado por las divinidades protectoras del universo: el Sol, la Luna y las Montañas. En lum balumilal, los guardianes de la madre tierra y las fuerzas naturales son responsables de preservar ese orden manteniendo la vida humana en equilibrio con la naturaleza. Del "Dueño" (Ajau witz, Tatik Anh'el) se cuentan muchas historias didácticas que la memoria colectiva transmite de familia en familia:

Hace mucho tiempo la virgen (Jalametik) le dio el maíz a un niño y le dijo: "Estas semillas se harán milpa." El niño sembró las semillas, crecieron cuatro arbustos grandes y dieron espigas, luego el niño fue a picar la milpa y se llevó las espigas a su casa, pero al otro día fue a ver la milpa, que estaba igual como si no hubiera cosechado, y lo volvió a hacer, al día siguiente volvió otra vez y lo mismo del día anterior, así hizo durante ocho días seguidos, pero se aburría de tanto trabajo y cortó las cañas de la milpa con su machete, entonces apareció el Dueño y le dijo: "Ya has perdido la semilla porque cortaste la caña de la milpa, si la hubieras doblado y dejado secar... se quedan sin plantas y habrá que esperar hasta el próximo año." Desde entonces se tapisca solo una vez al año (informe de Navil, Tenejapa).

The Tzeltal world appears quite similar to its other Maya siblings. It is formed by a cosmos (chul chan), mother earth (lum balumilal or ch'ul balumilal), and the underworld (k'atimbak). The balance and harmony between these three spaces is rewarded by the protective divinities of the universe: the Sun, the Moon and the Mountains. In lum balumilal, the guardians of mother earth and natural forces are responsible for preserving that order by keeping human life in balance with nature. From the "Owner" (Ajau witz, Tatik Anh'el) many instructive stories are told and transmitted through a collective memory from family to family:

- Long time ago, the maiden (Jalametik) gave the corn seed to a boy and told him: "These seeds, they will become milpa". The boy then planted the seeds, four large bushes grew and gave ears. Time passed, and the boy harvested the milpa, he took the ears to his house; but the next day he went to see the milpa, and it was still the same as if he hadn't harvested, then he did it again. The next day he went back, nothing had changed. He did this for eight continuing days. He got bored of so much work and cut the reeds of the milpa with his machete. Then the Owner appeared and told him: "You have already lost the seed because you cut the cane from the milpa, if only you had bent it and let it dry... now you are left without plants and you will have to wait until next year". Since then, the harvest occurs only once a year (story from Navil, Tenejapa).

THE RED CORN

For a long time, it has been told how red corn was born.

Once upon a time there was a man who didn't care for work. He started looking for a wife, but no one liked him because he was lazy. He had already traveled to several places in search of a wife, and nobody paid attention to him because he was not a man of commitment. Then one day, a woman cared for him. She went to her dad and asked him:

"Dad, accept him!" - "I will marry him and see how we'll eat"

The newlyweds moved far away from their parents and, with the passage of time, they had a male child. Shortly after, they had a girl. The man began to work, he made his milpa and the corn grew very well. The following year, he had excellent cobs from their milpa.

Then the third planting year, it did not turn out as expected. The man and his family began to suffer the consequences. Every time he sowed, he no longer harvested what he expected. The woman noticing the situation and told her husband:

"Plant again and I'll see how to make the milpa grow."

The husband returned to sow in his milpa. However, he did not harvest as he wanted. The milpa hardly gave a few small ears. He was very angry with the results and stopped caring for his milpa. Then, the woman was the one who went alone, and she did find large ears of corn.

With great wonder, the man finally decided to go see how she was able to harvest from their milpa. He was amazed but realized that the milpa did not appear harvested. Upon returning home, he asked his wife:

"Where did you get the corn you're harvesting?" The milpa does not look like you harvested, the corn is intact!

"Why do you say that? I have harvested it from that milpa," she replied to her husband.

"Where else do you think I would take it from?"

The husband didn't believe her, he took her to show her how the milpa appeared. Realizing that there was no harvest, at that time, he got mad. Enraged, he raised his hand, and since she was next to him, accidentally hit her nose. Instantly, she began to bleed. The woman held her nose to prevent further bleeding and cleaned it with her hand.

In that instant, some cobs of the milpa were splashed with drops of blood and the sprinkled ears became red corn.

The man was grateful to his wife, who was harvesting the corn. His family had been blessed by the creators of nature. Every time the wife visited the milpa, the corncobs multiplied and not only that, they were big and beautiful ears of corn. Thus, the wife continued to visit the milpa. When the husband ran out of corn, he instead sent his wife.

THE RED CORN

He was still very curious to know where she reaped the harvest.

"Tomorrow you're going to bring more corn because we don't have any more," he told his wife.

However, the wife no longer wanted to go alone for the corn, but the husband insisted.

"Tomorrow you'll make me my pozol, I'll go to work with you!" the husband ordered.

"Okay," the wife answered.

His wife prepared his pozol and his work tools. The man pretended to go to work and went to hide at the edge of the milpa. There he was, sitting, when he realized that, little by little, the woman entered the milpa to harvest the corn. The woman filled a sack with corn and went home.

When the woman left the milpa, the man went to look out and realized that there were few reaped bushes. When he returned home, he apologized to his wife, for what he had told her and for hurting her by accident. He then understood the real origin of the corn she brought from the milpa. But the woman decided not to forgive him and left the house.

"I don't want to be here anymore." You have hurt me enough! Your milpa will no longer serve you, it will be flooded with water ---and she cursed her husband.

The woman asked her two children to stay and spend a little more time with their father.

"Your uncle will come for you. I leave you one pot of beans and a tecomate of tortillas, when you feel hungry just touch it. This is the way in which I will send food, but do not tell your father."

The woman went to take refuge in a cave. What she had said became a fact, her husband's cornfield filled with water. Meanwhile the man suffered because he could not find food to eat but was surprised because his two children did not suffer from hunger as he did.

One good day he asked them:

"Where do you get your food from? I can see that you are not hungry."

But the children said nothing. The days passed and the man began to spy on his children. The man couldn't handle his hunger anymore, he was starving and nearly fainting at every corner. The children did not touch their bean pot while their father was close.

The mother began to worry because her children barely asked for food.

"What happened to them? Why haven't they ask for food?"

But the children could not touch the pot or the tecomate, because their dad kept watching them. Their dad went out for a moment to the patio and the children quickly took the opportunity to touch the pot and the tecomate to order food.

THE RED CORN

When the dad came back, he found them eating some delicious tortillas with beans. The father wondered and wondered how his children had found food. Full of anger, he broke the pot and the tocomate.

The next day, someone came to the patio of the house, a mysterious red-headed buzzard. The children watched all the buzzard all afternoon but they did not know that he was their uncle. One day, their mother visited the children secretly and asked:

“Why didn't you come with your uncle?”

“He didn't come to the house!” they replied.

“Didn't you see him when he arrived?”

“No, we only saw a buzzard arrive at the patio”

“He is your uncle. When he comes again he will open his wings. My son, you will hang on the right wing and your little sister on the left wing.

When the buzzard arrived again, it opened its wings and the children held on, just as their mother had indicated and took them where she hid.

This is how red corn came to be.

http://dgei.basica.sep.gob.mx/files/fondo-editorial/lengua-materna-lengua-indigena/libros-de-literatura/lmli_11_00002.pdf



TALE OF THE RED CORN

They say that many years ago, there was once a man who lived very alone in his shack in the field. One day, feeling lonely, he left his house to work on his land; Suddenly he heard someone talking on the side of the road, he turned to see who it was. It was a snake that was talking to him, the man asked:

-What are you doing? -

And the snake replied:

-Here, I was left here, some hunters broke my back and I can no longer continue my way.

And the snake asked:

-Would you take me back home?... because I don't know how else to return.

And the man said:

-No, because you can bite me.

-“No, I'm not going to bite you,” said the snake.

The snake insisted for a long time, then the man agreed and said:

-Okay, I'll take you, but if you bite me, I'll let you go and I'll leave you lying there.

So they set out on their journey. The path the snake indicated was very narrow and the man could hardly pass. The man and the snake arrived to a stone wall, which was at the foot of a mountain.

The serpent said:

-Go and touch the back of that branch, it is my father's key, that is where it is found! It can open the house!

By touching it, the stone moved and the door opened. Inside the mountain there was great bounty of corn, beans, and other seeds. The man was amazed because there were quite a few lovely women.

Suddenly, he saw that a very large man was coming towards him and asked him:

-What are you coming to my house for?

The man replied:

- I came here because on the side of the road, I found your son almost dead, some hunters attacked him.

It was then that the very tall man felt very worried and did not know what to do anymore and said:

- Come to my house good man and thank you for bringing my son!

They say the man's name was Usum (mushroom). And unintentionally the man had stared amazed at the women.

Suddenly, the very tall man, who was an angel, asked:

-Do you like my daughter?

And the man answered:

-No, not at all!

-If you like one of my daughters you can choose one of them and take her with you! said the angel.

TALE OF THE RED CORN

Hearing that, the man was filled with joy and said:

-Would you give me the older sister?

The angel said:

-No, because she is the mother of hurricanes and they will destroy your cornfields!

Then the man asked again:

-Will you give me the younger sister?

The angel said:

-Yes, you can take her, but don't mistreat her, take good care of her because she is the mother of the crops!

Listening, the man promised that he would take care of her, and at that moment, they were returned to his house by a wind current. Once at their home, they began to harvest a large amount of corn, beans and squash.

One afternoon, when the man had gone to work, a poor woman approached their home to buy some corn from the daughter of the angel. She quickly took care of the woman. As the poor woman was on her way back, she felt her sack kept getting heavier and heavier with every step she took. When she turned a corner she ran into the man who was, then, the husband of the angel's daughter.

When the man saw the abundant corn that the woman had, he asked her:

-Where did you get that corn from?

And the woman replied:

-I came to buy it from your wife.

-And how much did you pay her?

-“Three bits of gold,” answered the woman.

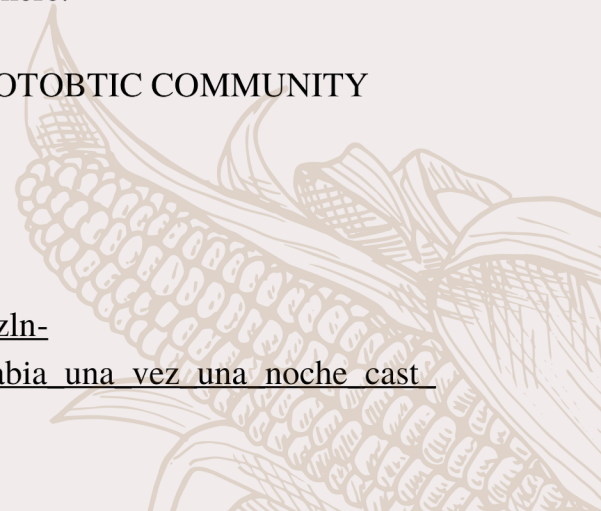
The man got very angry and went home. When he arrived at his house, he hit his wife, their two little children began to cry out of fear. He then left his house and went for a walk.

The woman cried with sadness and, oh! Plenty of blood came out of her nose. Then, with a piece of corn she wiped her nose.

They say, then, that at that moment all the corn that was in his house turned to a red color. Our ancestors say that red corn originated there.

FELIPE, POTOBTIC COMMUNITY

https://serazln-altos.org/habia_una_vez_una_noche_cast-tsotsil.pdf



THE MOTHER OF CORN

An old Mexican legend tells the story of a tribe from the south of the country, the Huicholes, who were in the Sierra Madre del Oeste, were tired of always eating the same thing. In fact, they did not like the food they had, but they were content because huge mountains separated them from the rest of Mexico, and none dared to venture beyond those peaks.

But one day, one of the youngest Huicholes heard that behind the mountains there was a very tasty ingredient with which hundreds of different recipes could be prepared. They called that food 'corn'.

The young man did not know what he would find, nor if he would be able to cross the mountains alive, but he decided to try. One day, he put some food along with a bow and arrows in a little bag and went out in search of the corn.

The young man began to walk and climb the mountain. It was hard, especially because at the summit, which was full of snow, it was very cold. Then he managed to get down, and right on the slope, he saw a good number of ants that formed an endless row.

"Wow," thought the young Huichol, "these ants will surely show me the way to the corn. It must be close."

And since the young man was very tired, he fell asleep next to them. The ants then took advantage of the night to eat all his clothes and bag, so that the young Huichol only had a bow and an arrow.

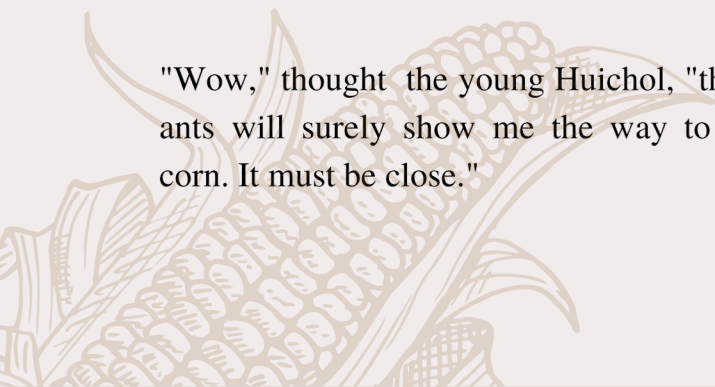
Realizing that he had been left with nothing and that he was half naked, he despaired. He was also very hungry. He then spotted a huge bird approaching him, he did not think twice, and took his bow and his last arrow to hunt it down. As he pointed at the bird, he suddenly heard it speak:

"Stop! Don't do it!" said the bird. "If you spare my life, I'll take you to the place where I keep my corn. I am the mother of corn, and I have five daughters who take care of it."

The boy, amazed, put aside the bow and decided to accompany the bird to the place of the corn.

It turned out that the bird was telling the truth, and soon the young Huichol could see a beautiful field of golden plants growing between large hard green leaves.

"It's corn," said the bird "and with it you can cook anything you want. And these are my five daughters: Yellow Mazorca, Red Mazorca, White Mazorca, Blue Mazorca and Black Mazorca."



A HUICHOL STORY

THE MOTHER OF CORN

The young man saw five beautiful girls appear slowly, approaching from the beautiful cornfield.

The young Huichol ate chilaquiles and delicious corn pancakes that the girls had prepared, and little by little, he fell in love with one of them: Mazorca azul. Since she also felt the same way about the young Huichol, she decided to accompany him back to his village with the corn. Upon arrival, all its inhabitants were very happy and prepared a great party to prepare for the wedding between the young Huichol and Blue Mazorca.

She taught them to plant and take care of the corn and to prepare delicious recipes. And when they thought they knew everything, she thought it was time to teach them the best of her recipes, and she taught them how to prepare *atole*, a hot drink that has been part of their culture and tradition ever since.

<https://es.slideshare.net/linogonzaleztorres/cuento-la-madre-del-maiz>





AN OTOMÍ STORY

THE ORIGIN OF CORN FOR HUMANS

A long time ago, but a long long time ago, the rat stole the corn from the loft to take it to another land surrounded by water. She was the sole owner of the corn. She pierced the loft to steal the cobs.

One day, during his travels, the raven rested on the island and asked the rat:

"What are you doing?"

The rat replied that she was eating corn.

Knowing that humans did not consume corn and remembering Creator, who had sent him, the raven told the rat: "I go wherever I want. Will you give me your corn to take to the land where I live? There is no corn there."

The rat did not want to get rid of her goods but she was already annoyed and wanted to be away from where other beings lived. Then she answered the raven: — "I'll give you my corn, but you have to take me to the place where you live."

So they agreed.

The raven took out the ears of corn, the rat climbed on his back and together they went to the land of the craven. That's where they stayed.

Now, all human beings eat corn and also rats still steal corn from houses.

An Otomí story

<https://libros.conaliteg.gob.mx/2021/P4LEA.htm#page/91>

THE LEGEND OF CORN

A long, long time ago,
The Creators were worried thinking:
"What will the people of the earth eat?"
They are looking for food!

The god Quetzalcoatl, trying to find out
why food was scarce, saw the red ant and
asked:

"Where did you find the corn kernels?"

She didn't want to tell him.

"Please tell me", Quetzalcoatl insisted.

"Schh!, schhh!, it's a secret..." answered the
ant—, but I'm going to tell you: the grains
of corn are there, on the Mount of
Sustenance. There we have hidden all the
food.

"Please, red ant, won't you come with me? I
want to go... and see... There are so many
children who don't have anything to eat!"

"Well, I'll go with you," she told him, "but
only if we become friends."

Then Quetzalcoatl became a black ant
and together they entered the Mount of
Sustenance. Between the two, they
transported the grains of corn to the shores
of the mountain and then they were taken to
Tamoanchan, the land of new life.

The gods distributed that corn in the
people's mouths. And they cast lots with its
grains. After feeding the people, the gods
wondered: "What will we do with the
Mount of the Sustenance?"

Quetzalcóatl had the idea of taking it
away. He tied it up with ropes, but no
matter how much force he used, he
couldn't lift it. The Creators were all
around him, looking, thinking, all the
creators of the earth and of the rain, the
creators blue as the sky, the white creators,
the yellow ones, the red ones. Among all
they chose Nanahuatl, and put him in
charge of tearing up the mountain.

The rain creators piled up the earth and
they brought white corn, yellow corn,
green cane, blackish corn, beans, pigweed,
chia, and chicalote.

All that is our sustenance was taken away
by the rain creators!

...

Another version says that that this place
was simple, but carrying the grain of corn
was heavy, and it was almost impossible to
remove it through the small slot where the
ants entered.

Then, the god Quetzalcóatl asked the god
Nanáhuatl (the sun creator who
represented humility) for help, and he
launched a powerful thunderbolt against
the mountain, splitting it in two, and
exposing the entire cornfield.

And that was how, from then on, people
were able to feed themselves with the corn
that the 'mountain of our sustenance'
offered them.

