

Childhood of Ji-shib

The day after he built the eagle cage it was the common knowledge of the village that one of his playmates had that morning gone alone into the forest to begin his fast. All Ojibwa boys fast, when they are as old as Ji-shib was now, in order to dream of some animal or plant which shall be their special Guardian Spirit or Totem henceforth.

Ji-shib was not much surprised therefore at what occurred at noon. As his birch-bark dish was handed him there were soft black cedar coals in it, instead of food to eat. He knew what to do with them, so without saying anything, or even looking at his father or mother or grandmother, he blackened his face with the coals. Then he took his bow and arrows and beaver-skin medicine bag, and went away into the forest back of the village. There he must stay alone four days and nights, without food or wigwam. If he was able to do that, there would be little doubt but that he would grow up through his boyhood and young manhood into a worthy hunter and warrior and husband.