

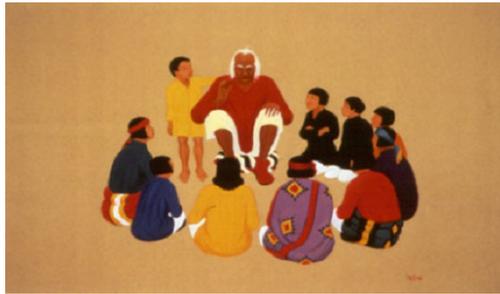
About Standing Deer

By Paul Hinsberger

In early 2016, I was presented with a gift from Spirit: I was given Guidance to write a series of short stories based on a young boy named Standing Deer, who, in later life, will become a Medicine Man. He is from the Arapaho People of Colorado.

The stories are filled with teachings. This is actually the first story—the gifted story—that I share with you here. The collection is intended to be told in the oral tradition, or they may be read. Do share this with your children, grandchildren, and in your places of worship.

May these words fill fly straight into your heart.



The Grandfather added another log to the fire; he poked at it with a stick, resting it just so. The children sat on the floor watching him, the light of the fire captured in their eyes. Long shadows crossed the room and over the beamed ceiling.

Satisfied, The Grandfather moved to his seat. His eyes touched the eyes of the twelve children who sat on the wooden floor. One by one, The Grandfather saw them, recognizing them. He saw himself in their eyes.

He smiled at the children, a young mix from the reservation. Boys, girls...it did not matter. The Old Ways needed to be expressed to all.

Rain began to fall upon the roof. He looked up; “It is time.” The children leaned in closer as he lowered his voice; “Who wants to hear a story?”

The children nodded as one. They knew not to speak unless asked to do so.

The Grandfather opened his hand with the palm upwards; he directed it towards a boy in the front; “What story shall I tell you tonight, Johnny Two Feathers?”

The boy looked at the others beside him. “A story about Standing Deer, Grandfather.”

The children nodded.

Grandfather waved his hand to the young ones; “And which one shall it be?”

“How he came to be!”

“The Stone Cave!”

“Standing Deer climbs the Impossible Tree!”

“The Day Standing Deer ate his Shadow!”

Grandfather looked over at a young girl he had never seen before. He had heard of a young woman that had come to the reservation a week earlier; she arrived with only a suitcase and her daughter. “And you, my dear, which story would you like to hear?”

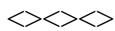
The young girl lowered her head, her voice a whisper.

“My ears have grown faint over the years my child from the noise of thunder and rain and of snow. Please, speak up so we can all hear the music of your voice.”

The young girl looked up. “I have never heard any of the stories of Standing Deer. Who is he?”

Grandfather brought his hands together, rubbed, and slowly parted them as if opening up a book. As he did so, the shadow of a young boy flew across the room. The children gasped.

“Then we shall begin at the beginning.”



At the time of this story, it was the eleventh Summer of Standing Deer. He had forgotten the first, and the second was only a memory of brown skin and massage of his mother’s back as she performed her daily chores. From the third summer, he could recall.

The people watched Standing Deer. They would point out and say things such as; “Did you see Standing Deer help Grandfather Singing Eagle this morning?” or “Standing Deer helped Grandmother with her firewood this morning....”

He was also helpful to the younger ones, sharing the things he had learned from his Grandfather, such things as plants and berries and from animals.

And with his peers, Standing Deer was helpful, would tell stories and jokes, and was a friend to many.

The Elders saw this, and they kept him in the back of their minds.

One day, the Elders gathered at the request of Grey Fox. Grey Fox was a very old Medicine Man and a Trickster. He, too, had seen Standing Deer, and as Grey Fox felt that his time would come in a few more years, he wanted to discuss this with the Elders. He thought that Standing Deer would be a suitable person for such a responsible role.

So, the Elders and Grey Fox sat in a circle and spoke of this. They smoked many pipes and prayed and talked and talked and talked, and they took their time doing so as it was a significant thing of which

they spoke.

The Elders called for Standing Deer's parents, and they came right away. After the courtesies were exchanged, they learned about the Elder's decision. They gave their approval. Now it was time to talk with Standing Deer.

And so, the next day, Standing Deer came to the Elders, accompanied by his father.

Grey Fox spoke, "I have been watching you, Standing Deer. You are well-liked by us. We see you share your knowledge...we see you offer help. We know you are respected by all. We know too that you have a sense of humor and that you have naughty jokes too. I would like to train you for an important part in the tribe...to take over for me someday."

Standing Deer looked at Grey Fox and then the Elders. "I am honored, Uncle."

Behind the fire, an Elder spoke up, "We have a test for you Standing Deer before anything is certain."

Standing Deer looked at the Elder and nodded.

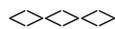
The Elder stood; "We want you to go out...to go away for three days. Take food, water, and a blanket. You may also take your bow and knife. While you are away, we want you to find a funny story. Your story will determine if you may study with Grey Fox."

Standing Deer thanked them and left the council tipi.

Once outside, he ran home and quickly told his mother.

"Where is your father?"

"I am here," said the man as he stepped into their tipi. "Our son forgot about me and ran here so fast, even the rabbits moved out of the way when he passed them!"



The next day, Standing Deer began his three-day adventure.

With some food, his bow, quiver, and knife, he set out into the rising Sun of the East in search of a funny story. He sent a prayer to the East...as it is the direction of things that are New. He felt this was the best direction to go, and so, he did so.

As Standing Deer walked, he looked for a funny story.

Now, funny stories can be found everywhere—if you know where and how to look. However, for Standing Deer, this was the first time that he ever went out searching for one. And as you most likely know, whenever you go out looking for something, it does everything it can to make sure you can not find it!

The first day passed, and Standing Deer found nothing funny.

On the second day, the Sun came up. He looked at the rising Sun as it spread its light through trees. He looked at the shadows...no funny there! He made some shadow puppets—the young ones it when he made animals shadows with his hands, and even those refused to laugh this morning.

He ate some of the dried elk meat his mother had given him and also some of her bread, which had become quite hard by now. And Once again, he set off, looking for a funny story.

By late afternoon, nothing funny came to him.

Poor Standing Deer!

So he sat on a boulder and threw pebbles into a pond. Splish! Splash! Not even the fish wanted to share any of their stories with him!

It was then that he heard a sound...a faraway sound of the rustle of bushes.

His mind recalled this sound...he saw his friends using the shrubs to answer natures call. Only one friend of his came out this far—Manish Boy.

“I bet that’s him! I’ll catch him with his pants down—that will be a funny story!”

Standing Deer headed in the direction of the sound.

Up and over the boulders and rocks, over the fallen logs, and through the brambles and weeds. Standing Deer paused and listened...more bush sounds and breathing too. “Oh, that’s him alright—he breathes like that when he’s tired. This will be great!”

Standing Deer moved with the silence of his namesake; a quiet foot here and quiet foot there...he crept forward, ears perked up like a deer...listening carefully with each step...his feet so, so soft and he moved through the undergrowth and through the thicket.

He came to the breathing bush...oh, this is going to be funny!

And then, Standing Deer leaped up into the air, letting out his War Cry; “Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

He landed on the ground, snapping a branch or two; the air filled with the echo of his war cry and snapping branches...it sounded as if there was a war going on!

He looked at the bush and then he saw something funny!

It wasn’t Mannish Boy using the bushes.



Oh, no....it was Ironsides, the most notable Bear in the region! And Ironsides...poor Ironsides...when he heard all the ruckus...he too jumped...he jumped the height of a man...upwards! Have you ever seen a bear jump straight up? Oh, it is something special to see!

However, Ironsides was not too happy...as you can imagine!

When he came back down on all four legs, he did what any sensible bear would do—he ran. And of course, he ran in

what Standing Deer would later call, the ‘wrong direction’ which, of course, was towards him!

Standing Deer did the sensible thing; he too ran, and he ran in the opposite direction, towards the charging Ironsides!

Zoooooom! He rushed right past that Old Bear!

Ironsides, who by now had collected his thoughts, stopped and turned. He called out to Standing Deer, “Little Brother! Stop! Wait!”

Now, it turns out that Standing Deer has a Grandfather named Old Man, who had taught his grandson how to speak Bear. Standing Deer turned and said, “I am sorry, Brother Bear. I thought you were Mannish Boy!”

They stood a respectful distance from each other.

“Why did you do that, Little Brother?”

“I seek a Funny Story.”

“Well, there was nothing Funny in what just happened!”

“Well, you did jump like a scared kitten!” (This is how the phrase ‘scaredy-cat’ was born!)

“I didn’t find that funny. Not at all. Anyway, you are lucky that I am not hungry and that you don’t smell good, or you would be hanging in my cave right now. Don’t do that again!”

And with that, Ironsides turned and walked away.

“What does he mean I don’t smell good?” Standing Deer took a sniff to make sure that it was not true. He didn’t smell anything unusual.

Feeling a bit hurt—after all, who likes to be told they stink—Standing Deer followed Ironsides with his deer-like footsteps.

He soon found the Bear standing on his back legs, reaching up a high tree.

“I’ll show that Old Bear, who stinks!”

Standing Bear brought out one of his practice arrows—the kind without the sharp end—he put it into his bow, drew back, eyeing the big brown bottom of the standing Ironsides.

Back and back and back...the bow held firmly by Standing Deer. He held his breath as his Grandfather had taught him and released the arrow.

Whoosh!

He watched as the arrow suddenly touched—oh so lightly—a branch that was between him and Old Ironsides.

“Oh, oh!”

The arrow rose up and up and up...woosh and whizz, and was now aiming for the massive brown head of Old Ironsides!

Standing Deer was about to shout a warning when Old Ironsides lowered himself, and the arrow barely missed his head...and went into a beehive with a loud and squishy sounded ‘Thunk!’ that hung from the tree. Standing Deer never saw the hive as Old Ironsides had covered it up with his massive head and flicking tongue!

Now the bees of the hive—they knew all about Old Ironsides. The bees shared their honey with him for years now, and Old Ironsides also knew that if he took too much, the bees would get mad, so he was respectful to the bees and ate just a little bit, especially after a meal.

Well, the bees were not at all happy about having an arrow come through the front door of their hive. And bees being bees...they are very smart you know...they looked down the arrow shaft and it pointed right to Standing Deer!

The bees called out with their War Cry (which is not a pretty sound!), and they flew over the head of Old Ironsides, and in a screaming cloud of buzzing black, they charged towards Standing Deer!

“Oh, oh!” He cried.

Standing Deer turned and ran. The bees now were enraged as they could both see and *smell* him!

The bees, as one, danced between branches and trees seeking revenge. They flew past a swarm of gnats. One of them asked, “Brother Bees—why do you go to war?”

One of the bees buzzed around the gnats; “One of the two-legged attacked our nest!”

Well, if you know anything about gnats, it is this: they do not argue with others, and they are known to take advantage of things that come their way. Since they did not want to anger the bees, they too put up

their war cry—a humming buzzy kind of cry—and they too joined the bees!

Now, Standing Deer ran and ran. He fell down often, tripping over fallen trees and roots. He fell so often that soon, he was covered with mud and leaves.

Standing Deer ran and ran, and ran...he fell in the river; he fell in the sand. He got up and slipped and fell again, this time into a pile of deer droppings!

He stood up and saw his village...closer and closer with each foot step...both village and bees...he heard them in his head...louder and louder and louder! The buzzing louder than his breath and his drumming heart!

Standing Deer yelled out to the men who stood nearby.

There were two of them; they looked at the dripping, grass, and dirt and sand and deer dropping covered human being that ran towards them, who screamed, “Bees!!!!”

The men grabbed their spears and prepared for the worst.

This filth covered human being ran past them...the men turned and stood at the ready...though they knew not what they were ready for!

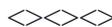
Because you see, there were no bees!

Instead, there was one little gnat. And if they could have seen the gnat up close, they would have seen a gnat with a very determined face going after something that looked very delicious. And that something was Standing Deer!

And so this is how Standing Deer became a student of Grey Fox in eventually became a significant man with his people.



Standing Deer



The Grandfather looked at the children. “So, what lessons did you learn from Standing Deer?”

A boy raised his hand.

“Yes, son?”

“If you smell bad, bears won’t eat you?”

Grandfather laughed so hard. “Such wisdom!” He slapped his knee; “Not quite...it was more of a matter that Old Ironside was full, and besides, if you smell bad, will the human beings want to eat with you? Of course not! They’ll throw you scraps as if you are a stray dog. We don’t want that now, do we?”

The children nodded. Grandfather went on, “Let’s look at the beginning...”

The quiet girl spoke, “He was seen by the people...he helped others.”

“Yes. Standing Deer showed respect to those who were older, and he would help them. He also shared his knowledge with the young ones—he was a teacher. Also, he was well-liked by his peers...by those of his age. These are good things. It says a great deal about a person. He spoke with his actions of the kind of person that he was.”

A boy asked, “Why did the Elders want him to find a Funny Story?”

“Anyone want to answer?”

An older boy raised his hand; “He was asked to find a special kind of a story. Funny things are there all the time, but when we go out looking for it...it may be harder to find. Rather than make one up, Standing Deer needed to actual lived it—this made the story real. He was also able to laugh at himself...I know of Standing Deer, my father told me of him. He became a very famous Medicine Man, and he used laughter as a way to teach and to heal others.”

“Is this true, Grandfather? Was he famous?”

Grandfather nodded.

Another boy raised his hand; “When Standing Deer made the Bear jump...what lesson is there?”

A girl raised her hand; “He was very foolish...he did not know who was there, and it could have ended very badly for him.”

“Yes!” said Grandfather as he captured the children’s eyes. “This is a very important thing. The lesson here is patience and certainty. What he did was very dangerous...know what awaits before you take action. He was very fortunate that he encountered a very rare thing: a Bear with a full tummy!”

The children laughed.

“Also, when he let loose his arrow...he did this all wrong.”

“How so, Grandfather?”

“He wanted to play a prank on Old Ironsides. But it was a prank that could have seriously hurt Brother

Bear. It was a good thing that the arrow hit a limb of the tree and was guided to hit the beehive instead.”

“Why was that Grandfather?”

“Well, it saved Brother from injury...I didn’t mention it in the story, but Old Ironsides...do you know what he did after the bees left the hive?”

The children waved their heads as one; “No.”

“He watched what happened, and he sat under that hive and licked up the honey that dripped from that arrow that was deep in the hive. He never had to try to get the honey—it came to him!”

“Smart bear!” said one of the children.

“Smarter than Standing Deer at that time,” chuckled Grandfather. “What else do you think Standing Deer learned that day?”

“He ran and ran for so long...how did he do that?”

“Well...did he ever look back?”

“No.”

“That’s right. Standing Deer panicked. When that happens, you stop using this...your...”

“Head!” called out the children.

“Exactly!”

A boy raised his hand; “Was it wise to run to the village?”

Grandfather scanned the room; “What would you have done?”

The children were silent for a long moment.

Grandfather asked, “What could have happened if the bees were still chasing Standing Deer? Do you think they could have hurt the people?”

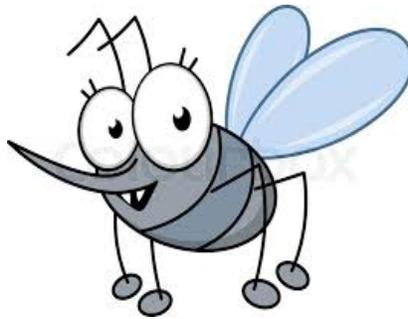
The children chewed on this.

Grandfather looked at the young ones; “We don’t really know what could have happened. Most likely, they would have buzzed around, shared some of our food...a few people may have been stung...then again, maybe none as we could talk to them and apologize for whatever was done. Remember, the bees are vital to us. We need them much more than they need us. Of course, they were angry—their home was attacked. Who knows how many of their loved ones were killed or injured by that arrow.”

“Then, this is a sad story rather than a funny story.” said the quiet girl.

“No, not really granddaughter. You see, funny and sad are related; they need each other to live. You laughed as I told the story. This is one of the things, though—until you look at something from many sides, you will only see something from the front. Sometimes, we need to look at things in many ways to understand all of it. The story was intended to be funny...this is what Standing Deer needed to find—and he did. However, this story is like the rings of a tree—there are many layers to the story.”

One of the boys asked, “And about the gnat?”



“Oh, yes, the gnat.” Grandfather smiled. “The gnat never gave up. He was tenacious. It also proves something.”

“And what is that, Grandfather?”

“That sometimes it is the smallest things than can hound you. Rather than being eaten alive by a bear, Standing Deer now faced the chance of being chewed and bothered by something so small that it would hound him for hours.” He looked around, “Any idea what he would need to do?”

“Jump in the river and wash?” smiled the quiet girl.

Grandfather looked her and laughed; “Indeed!”

A-ho!



A-ho!