

## Bear Did Not Always Hibernate An American Indian Legend

The bear is a giant of a beast, but gentle to all who see its tender loving ways. The bear did not always sleep (hibernate).

It was during the time of the first winter that Wind gave Bear the gift of sleep. All the animals of the forest thought Bear was lazy and slow. They would tease him and harass the poor soul daily. They viewed his kind gentle ways as a weakness.

They always laughed at his friends, and when he stopped and talked to them. Still Bear did not hate or get angry at the animals who made fun of him, he just smiled and went on his way. He loved his feathered friends, his underground friends and his underwater friends. The only time he was sad is when he was hungry and had to eat one of them.

One day father Wind heard all the animals talking about how foolish bear was. Even Fish turned against his friend. This made Wind very mad.

In a dream he taught Bear what plants to eat and all about the bad things Fish had said. He told Bear fish was not a friend but food. He also told Bear that because he was kind he would receive a special gift. Then Bear awoke wondering what gift would Wind give him.

In the next dream, Bear was sad. Winter asked him what is wrong? "I am only good because I have good friends." "That is true," said Winter. So he told Bear to go and tell all his friends about the gift that Wind had promised him.

When Bear awoke he ran through the forest and told all who would listen. This made him very tired and sleepy so he went back to the cave and fell asleep.

As before, many creature did not listen to Bear. They went about their business. Some even called him crazy. So Winter decided to teach them a lesson. As Bear and his friends slept, flew away, or gathered food, without knowing Winter came down upon the forest. Yet, he made sure that those who were friends of Bear were not aware of him or his brother Wind. To them it was a time of the gift.

So as Winter begins his journey across the land, one can still see who were the friends of Bear...Are you?