

Napi is not only a creator. He is also a trickster, one who can be cuttingly cruel, and what crueler joke to play on his people than to promise them protection only to abandon them?

Even though many native creation myths can be argued to be either male- or female-based, women play an important part in most. Old Man, for example, didn't create an Adam from clay; he created an Eve and child, and we don't know the child's gender. Other male-based myths emphasize woman's importance even more. For the Sioux nation, White Buffalo Calf Woman, also known as the Mother of Life, plays a critical role in their culture. The myth dates back at least 2,000 years. Several versions of the story are told. The one below is an adaptation of some of the more common versions.



Believe: She will return. She promised. When the world turns to chaos and disparity, she will return. She may already be among us.

Two warriors were hunting buffalo when a white buffalo calf appeared to them and transformed itself into a beautiful young woman. One warrior fell to his knees in awe, but the other warrior had other, more carnal ideas in mind for the beautiful woman. He started for her, and a black cloud descended over him. When it rose, only the warrior's leached bones remained.

"Go back to your people," the woman said to the remaining warrior. He trembled as she spoke, afraid even to look upon her. "Tell them I will bring a sacred bundle to them in four

days."

Four days later, the warrior and his people looked up at the sky. Nervous murmurs raced through the village as the villagers fell to their knees, both frightened and filled with joy by the miracle they were witnessing, a white buffalo calf descending on a white cloud. It stepped off the cloud and rolled onto the ground, its coat changing from white to black, to yellow, and, finally, to red. "No matter the color of our coat," it said, "we are all of one family." As the calf stood once again, it shook itself, transforming from the buffalo calf into the beautiful woman the warrior had seen days before.