

THE GOOSE GIRL

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Through all their uncounted thousands of years in the far north, the peoples of Alaska have always measured the passing of time by the shifting of the seasons; by the sun and the moon — and by the flight of the wild geese.

Legend holds that there once were no geese in Alaska. But one day a brave young warrior met a beautiful girl from the southlands. Little guessing that she was of the Goose-people, he married her, and built her a fine snug home where they passed the winter.

Soon a son was born to them, and they were happy together for a time. But when winter was again close at hand, the Goose-girl began to long for her home in the sunny southlands. One day, when the last leaves of autumn were clinging to their branches, she transformed herself and her son into geese, and they flew south to her people.

The grieving husband followed, although the journey by dogsled and kayak was long and difficult. At last, in the springtime of the year, he came to the village of the Goose-people, and there he found his wife and son.

Their reunion was so joyful that the Goose-people were greatly moved. It was agreed that all three should return to Alaska, in the shape of geese, for the summer months, and fly southward once more as each winter approached. And that's the reason — or so the storytellers say — that the wild geese come back to Alaska each year.

The legend of the Goose-girl reminds us that we must respect the patterns of nature that have shaped this land and its people. . . because it's up to all of us to make sure that the wild geese always return.