How Rabbit Brought Fire to the People
Julie Short: Bay View Proctor School Forest
Grades K-6
Subject: Language Arts
Standard: Student will compose various pieces of writing using descriptive language.
Before the Lesson:
  Build background: Build an outdoors fire. Talk about what students know about starting and maintaining an outdoors fire.
  Share a Native American story about How Rabbit Brought Fire to the People.
During the Lesson:
  Talk about and record on a chart descriptive words used in story
  Let students know there is more than one Native American story about How Rabbit Brought Fire to the People
  As share another story, have students listen for more descriptive words as well as for similarities to the first story.
  Talk about and record on the chart descriptive words used in second story
  Talk about and record similarities to the first story
  Have students write their own story about How Rabbit Brought Fire to the People using descriptive words and some of the common features (similarities) from both stories
After the Lesson:
  Invite students to share their stories with each other.
  Listen for descriptive words and similarities to the other stories about How Man Got Fire.
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Native American Lore

In the beginning there was no fire and the earth was cold. Then the Thunderbirds sent their lightning to a sycamore tree on an island where the Weasels lived. The Weasels were the only ones who had fire and they would not give any of it away.

The people knew that there was fire on the island because they could see smoke coming from the sycamore, but the water was too deep for anyone to cross. When winter came the people suffered so much from the cold that they called a council to find some way of obtaining fire from the Weasels. They invited all the animals who could swim.

"How shall we obtain fire?" the people asked.

Most of the animals were afraid of the Weasels because they were bloodthirsty and ate mice and moles and fish and birds. Rabbit was the only one who was brave enough to try to steal fire from them. "I can run and swim faster than the Weasels," he said. "I am also a good dancer. Every night the Weasels build a big fire and dance around it. Tonight I will swim across and join in the dancing. I will run away with some fire."

He considered the matter for a while and then decided how he would do it. Before the sun set he rubbed his head with pine tar so as to make his hair stand up. Then, as darkness was falling, he swam across to the island.

The Weasels received Rabbit gladly because they had heard of his fame as a dancer. Soon they had a big fire blazing and all began dancing around it. As the Weasels danced, they approached nearer and nearer the fire in the centre of the circle. They would bow to the fire and then dance backwards away from it.

When Rabbit entered the dancing circle, the Weasels shouted to him: "Lead us, Rabbit!" He danced ahead of them, coming closer and closer to the fire. He bowed to the fire, bringing his head lower and lower as if he were going to take hold of it. While the Weasels were dancing faster and faster, trying to keep up with him, Rabbit suddenly bowed very low so that the pine tar in his hair caught fire in a flash of flame.
He ran off with his head ablaze, and the angry Weasels pursued him, crying, "Catch him! Catch him! He has stolen our sacred fire! Catch him, and throw him down!"

But Rabbit outran them and plunged into the water, leaving the Weasels on the shore. He swam across the water with the flames still blazing from his hair.

The Weasels now called on the Thunderbirds to make it rain so as to extinguish the fire stolen by Rabbit. For three days rain poured down upon the earth, and the Weasels were sure that no fire was left burning except in their sycamore tree.

Rabbit, however, had built a fire in a hollow tree, and when the rain stopped and the sun shone, he came out and gave fire to all the people. After that whenever it rained, they kept fires in their shelters, and that is how Rabbit brought fire to the people.