

Native American Reflection Site



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Cherokee Creation Story

The earth is a great island floating in a sea of water, and suspended at each of the four cardinal points by a cord hanging down from the sky vault, which is of solid rock. When the world grows old and worn out, the people will die and the cords will break and let the earth sink down into the ocean, and all will be water again. The Indians are afraid of this. When all was water, the animals were above in *Gālūñ'lāti*, beyond the arch; but it was very much crowded, and they were wanting more room. They wondered what was below the water, and at last *Dâyuni'si*, "Beaver's Grandchild," the little Water-beetle, offered to go and see if it could learn. It darted in every direction over the surface of the water, but could find no firm place to rest. Then it dived to the bottom and came up with some soft mud, which began to grow and spread on every side until it became the island which we call the earth.

It was afterward fastened to the sky with four cords, but no one remembers who did this. At first the earth was flat and very soft and wet. The animals were anxious to get down, and sent out different birds to see if it was yet dry, but they found no place to alight and came back again to *Gālūñ'lāti*. At last it seemed to be time, and they sent out the Buzzard and told him to go and make ready for them. This was the Great Buzzard, the father of all the buzzards we see now. He flew all over the earth, low down near the ground, and it was still soft. When he reached the Cherokee country, he was very tired, and his wings began to flap and strike the ground, and wherever they struck the earth there was a valley, and where they turned up again there was a mountain. When the animals above saw this, they were afraid that the whole world would be mountains, so they called him back, but the Cherokee country remains full of mountains to this day.

When the earth was dry and the animals came down, it was still dark, so they got the sun and set it in a track to go every day across the island from east to west, just overhead. The conjurers put the sun another handbreadth higher in the air, but it was still too hot. They raised it another time, and another, until it was seven handbreadths high and just under the sky arch.

The Hopewell Reflection site was designed by Clemson University architecture students in the 1990s. Benches made of local stone are placed at the ordinal compass points. Each arch depicts the invisible cords connecting the earth to the sky. The Treaty Oak commemorative tree was planted by Troup 235, Eagle Project, B.S.A. in 2012.

