



## How Rabbit Came to Be

Mamawi Ohtawimow, the Creator, was busy making all the types of animals. One day he was hard at work on Wapoos the rabbit. Wapoos said to him, "I want long, strong legs so I can run fast through the trees to get away from other animals. I am going to be a plant eater and the others will want to eat me. I also want long ears like Upschimosis, the deer, so I can hear other animals coming from a long way. I also need sharp teeth and claws like Pakwachiminos, the cougar, so I can fight back if I want to."

"Meowsin wapoos. Very good choices. I'll make you the way you ask," said Mamawi Ohtawimow. He made Wapoos's hind legs very long, just the way Wapoos asked.

Owl, Oohoo, still not formed, was sitting on a tree nearby waiting his turn. "Whoo, whoo," he sang, "I want a long, graceful neck like Wapsiw, the swan, and a nice long beak like Kihew, the eagle, and a beautiful crown of plumes like Mohkhasiw, the heron. I want to be the most beautiful, fastest and wondrous of all birds."

"Kiyampi Oohoo, be quiet Owl," said Mamawi Ohtawimow. "Turn around and look somewhere else. Close your eyes too. Don't you know that you are not allowed to watch me work?"

Just at that moment Mamawi Ohtawimow was making Wapoos's ears very long, just as Wapoos had asked.

Oohoo refused to turn away. "Whoo, whoo," he sang again. "Nobody can tell me not to watch. Nobody can tell me to close my eyes. I'm going to keep watching you, because I want to."

This made Mamawi Ohtawimow mad. He grabbed Oohoo and pulled him off the branch, stuffed his head deep into his body and shook him until Oohoo's eyes were wide with fright. He pulled at Oohoo's ears until they stuck out from both sides of his head.

"That will teach you," said Mamawi Ohtawimow. "Now you won't be able to stick out your neck to watch things you are not supposed to watch. Now you have big ears to hear when someone tells you what not to do. Now you have big eyes – but not so big you can watch me, because you will be awake only at night. And your feathers will not be red, but grey like mud. This is your punishment for disobeying me."

Oohoo went off pouting.



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Then Mamawi Ohtawimow went back to finish Wapoos, but Wapoos had been so frightened by His anger that he ran off only half-done. As a consequence, only Wapoos's hind legs are long, and he has to hop instead of run. Since he was frightened before the work was complete, Wapoos has remained scared of almost everything, and never got the claws and sharp teeth he asked for. Had he not run away then, Wapoos would have been a very different animal.

As for Oohoo, he remained as Mamawi Ohtawimow shaped him – with big eyes, a short neck and ears that stick out the sides of his head. To make matters worse, he must sleep during the day and only come out at night.