



The Big Dipper and the Seven Brothers

Ihkitsiikamiiksi

By Carl Brave Rock



“Our sky stories are of the constellations in the Blackfoot sky, where we live”.

This story is about the Big Dipper and the Seven Brothers, Ihkitsiikamiiksi, and about the girl who married a bear, kiááyo.

The story begins with a girl who falls in love with a bear. She married a big grizzly bear, *otahkóissksisiyoohkiaayo*. Her father was very upset and felt dishonored by this union. So, the father gathered up a number of warriors and they went into the forest and killed this grizzly bear, *otahkóissksisiyoohkiaayo*. The girl was very upset. She went on to explain that what the grizzly bear did for her was endow her with a power for her to turn into a bear herself. She then turned herself into a bear and went back to camp and killed everybody in the camp; even ate her mother and her father. She left her younger brother, *isskán* and baby sister, *ihsiss* alive, and it just so happened that six of her brothers were out that day hunting.



Later that afternoon after the damage had been done, the little sister knew the brothers were coming back, so she ran out pretending to get water and ran out onto a trail until she met up with her brothers. She told her brothers what had happened then they were scared to come back. They were scared of their sister. They told their little sister, “We’ll rescue you tonight, we’ll take off tonight”. The brothers told her to gather some prickly pears. The little buds that grow on the ends of the cactus. Collect those and put them outside of the lodge. That night when they heard big sister, *ínsst* snoring, they took off. She grabbed little brother, *isskán*, threw him on her back and took off. Big sister, *ínsst* heard them and got up to chase after them. When she stepped on the prickly pears, she became upset enough to turn herself into a bear again. Now there’s a bear chasing seven brothers and a sister.



The baby brother, **isskán** had his own medicine. He shot an arrow up into the sky, and the siblings flew as far as the arrow, to give them a good head start.

Knowing that bears can run fast for a long time when the bear caught up to them, the baby brother, **isskán** needed more medicine. He created brush and trees behind him so the bear would have to make its way through all of that, but she caught up to her siblings again. After that, the baby brother made a huge and giant lake, so the bear went all of the way around the lake, but she caught up to them again. Baby brother, **isskán** then created a tall tree and climbed up that tree. When his sister, **ínsst** caught up to him, she began shaking that tree. Four of the brothers fell to the ground. There were three other brothers that made their way up to the top with nowhere else to go. The only safe place to go was to the sky and become stars. Little brother, **isskán** took his arrows and started shooting up at the sky. One by one, each of his brothers went into the sky and he followed with his other sister, **ínsst**.

If you look at the Big Dipper, there's a handle and the cup. The cup at the bottom are the four brothers that fell off the tree. The three on the handle are the brothers that were still in the tree. At the very end of the handle is the baby brother, **isskán**.

There are different versions of this story that don't include the sister, ínssst. But if you look at the Big Dipper, there is another star that is very faint; this is the sister who was holding baby brother on her back.

