

The Legend of the Three Sisters

Native Americans tell a story of three sisters who loved and supported one another. This most likely came to pass, when it was realized that the planted vegetables represented in this legend, grew successfully, when grown together.

There is the oldest sister, Corn, who grows very tall and lends support to her younger sister, Bean, who wraps herself around her older sister. Without Corn, Bean wouldn't have a place to climb and reach closer to the Sun. Bean helps her sisters by feeding food to the soil through her roots. Then there's the youngest sister, Squash, who is happy to stay close to the ground where she can fan her wide leaves out and bathe in sunlight from down there. Squash helps her sisters by shading the ground, keeping the earth moist with water, and preventing other weeds/plants from growing.



The Legend as it was told long ago...

A long time ago there were three sisters who lived together in a field. These sisters were quite different from one another in their size and way of dressing. The little sister [Squash] was so young, that she could only crawl at first, and she was dressed in green. The second sister [Beans] wore a bright yellow dress, and she had a way of running off by herself when the sun shone, and the soft wind blew in her face. The third [Corn] was the eldest sister, standing always very straight and tall above the other sisters, and trying to protect them. She wore a pale green shawl, and she had long, yellow hair that tossed about her head in the breeze.

There was one way the sisters were all alike though. They loved each other dearly, and they always stayed together. This made them very strong. One day a stranger came to the field of the Three Sisters—a Mohawk boy. He talked to the birds and other animals—this caught the attention of the three sisters. Late that summer, the youngest and smallest sister disappeared. Her sisters were sad. Again, the Mohawk boy came to the field to gather reeds at the water's edge. The two sisters who were left, watched his moccasin trail, and that night the second sister—the one in the yellow dress—disappeared as well. Now the Elder Sister was the only one left. She continued to stand tall in her field. When the Mohawk boy saw that she missed her sisters, he brought them all back together and they became stronger together, again.

Discussion Points:

- Why do you think the three crops of food that Native Americans grow are called sisters?
- When you have a relationship with someone or something, where you each depend on one another, that's called interdependence. Think of someone you rely on.
 - Share an example of how you depend on them.