

# **How Ducks Got Their Color**

Lakota

A young warrior, who from childhood had been every fond of bright colors, walked far from camp. He loved the beautiful colors of Indian summer. Now and then he would stop and take from his pouch some clay and oil to paint the colors he saw. As the shadows grew long, he knew that it would soon be time for the night fire, so he made his way to a nearby lake where he built a small lodge.

As he sat looking at the red sun which was about to go down under the colored sky, he heard the talk of waterfowl coming toward him. He saw large and small ducks, gray geese, and loons diving and playing. They were all his friends and he was glad to see them. He cupped his hands about his mouth and called to them. They were startled at first, but when they recognized him they paddled to shore.

The young man invited them all to his lodge. There they visited and took turns telling what they had done that day. When the young warrior told them that he had been studying and mixing colors, a gray duck became interested.

"You are our friend," said the duck. "Would you be so kind as to paint us with some of your beautiful colors?"

The large gray duck decided that he wished a pretty green head with a white stripe around his neck, a brown breast, and yellow legs. When he was painted, the duck flapped his wings. Ducks with these colors are now called mallard ducks.

"I hope you will not paint my mate with the same colors I have," he said. So she was painted mostly brown.

Then the teal had himself and his family painted as he desired. By this time the paints were almost gone, so there were no bright colors left for the goose and the loon.