



INTRODUCTION

The beloved traditional English Christmas carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, has been adapted here to reflect aspects of the richly varied cultures and traditions of twelve Native American cultural groups from different parts of the U.S. Author Gary Robinson presents a cultural background for each day's gift in an easy-to-understand manner, placing the adapted song lyrics in the context of these tribal cultures. Illustrator Jesse T. Hummingbird has again imaginatively translated Robinson's text into stunning visuals that stir the imagination. This book is a wonderful companion to Robinson and Hummingbird's best-selling *Native American Night Before Christmas*.

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



A Blanket for My Tipi

In early times before Europeans arrived, American Indians of the Plains such as the Lakota used deerskins and buffalo robes for clothing and for warmth. Later, these tribes traded with European traders and settlers for woolen blankets that had been made for trading just to Native Americans. Tipis are the traditional homes for many nomadic plains tribes that traveled from place to place in search of food. Today, Indian trade blankets are still prized by Native peoples.



On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Two Moccasins

Moccasins are made in different styles by different tribes, usually from deerskin or other animal hides. The moccasins shown here are the type made and worn by the Apache who live in New Mexico and Arizona. These moccasins protect the feet and lower part of the legs from cactus and the rough lands of the desert Southwest.



On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Three Beaded Bags

Several eastern woodland tribes used over-the-shoulder leather bags to hold food or trade goods on long journeys. These bags were often decorated with beads obtained in trade from European settlers. The Delaware Indians are particularly well known for their floral-designed beaded bags, such as the ones shown here, which are still made by a few Native artists.



On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Five Turquoise Rings

For many tribes of the Southwest such as the Pueblo Indians, turquoise is known as the “sky stone” and is a symbol for the sky. It is used to make many different kinds of beautiful jewelry worn by American Indian people today and is collected by non-Indians around the world.



On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me . . .



Seven Salmon Swimming

Salmon are unique fish. They live most of their lives in the ocean, but when it's time to have babies, they swim miles and miles up rivers, against the current, until they reach the place where they were born. There the females spawn—laying their eggs and protecting them until they hatch. These fish have been a traditional food for the tribes of the Pacific Northwest for thousands of years. The totem and fish carvings shown here reflect the artistic styles of the Native peoples of this region.

