

## **The Origin of the Bittersweet Vine**

**told by Nora Thompson Dean**

Once a man went hunting in a big forest. He hunted all day, and when he got tired that evening he went to sleep under a big tree. Not long after, an owl alighted in the tree and soon another owl came there. He heard the two of them talking and he finally knew that they were quarrelling. That must have been the husband of the owl. He told her, "Why did you come here? You must like this man!" The husband-owl accused his wife of being in that tree because she liked the man who was sleeping under it. Finally he hit her with his wing and something fell to the ground.

When it got daylight the man went to look at what he had heard fall, and he saw a red earring that fell last night. The hunter left it on the ground. In the Fall he returned to the forest, and where the earring had fallen something long was growing. It was covered with red berries that looked like the earring. That must have been the seed from which the Bittersweet Vine grew, and that is the reason we Lenape call it Kukhusëwim - the "Owl Berry".

*The version in Lenape can be found here:*  
<https://www.talk-lenape.org/stories?id=96#2386>