

## **How Coal Came to West Virginia: A Pourquoi Tale**

1<sup>st</sup> Place

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Many, many moons ago, when the earth was new, The Great One began admiring his beautiful handiwork. One of his favorite places in all the whole wide world was West Virginia. He loved the beautiful mountains, the sparkling clear streams, and the tall forests. Of course he was especially proud of all the animals that roamed the heavenly land. As he was walking up in the West Virginia hills one day, he came upon a family of bears. Those bears were grumbling about their bright white fur. “We love our thick, warm fur, but we can’t hide in the forests,” they complained to The Great One. He listened patiently and agreed to find a solution to their problem.

After thinking for a few minutes, The Great One said, “Bears, I have some leftover paint from coloring the night sky. Let’s give all of you a nice coat of pitch black paint, so you can hide in the shadows of the maple trees.” And before you could say mountaineer, the bears were a beautiful glossy black. But of course, being bears, they lumbered off to hunt for lunch before they were quite dry. As they bounded across the hills, black paint droplets fell from their backs and trickled across the land. The shiny black paint seeped into those West Virginia mountains – way, way down into the ground.

The Great One watched with a big smile on his face. He was pleased with the black bears and didn’t mind that paint was dripping into his hills. Who knew that millions of years later, those bits of dried black paint would be dug out of the mountains to help all of us West Virginians? To this day, The Great One and the bears are still smiling in the hills. Yes, that’s the almost heavenly tale of how coal came to West Virginia.