

Student Activity #2

Stories and Legends

Summary

Stories and legends are passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition. Cultural, ecological, and spiritual knowledge is transmitted through the stories. The stories contain the history, maps, and teachings of the spirits, instructions for ceremonies, beliefs, and values. Stories have the power to teach, heal, and reflect.

Components of Legends

Secwepemc legends contain:

- mythological creatures
- living animals, plants, and places within the Secwepemc realm of knowledge
- teachings of lessons and morals (how to behave and consequences of bad behavior)
- reminders, usually land or plant markers, how one must behave
- origins of land markers (where Coyote left his canoe)
- original instructions of how to live in balance with the natural world
- Explanations of survival – how people or animals overcame famine, flood,
- problems and solutions
- explanations of natural phenomenon
- Roadmaps for traveling – on the land and in the spiritual realm
- transformations of characters

Coyote (Seklep) is a central character in Secwepemc stories and legends. Some of his characteristics include:

- trickster
- sly
- cunning
- smart
- ability to transform himself (sometimes an animal, sometimes a human)
- ability to revive from death

Activity

Create a legend which contains some of the components listed above.

Suggestions:

- describe a land marker and explain how it came to be
- describe some natural phenomenon (lightening) and how it came to be
- a lesson on behavior (what happened when someone was greedy)

Practice telling your legend to a group – family, friends, or classmates.