

Tears of Joy Theatre
~presents~

Coyote Tales

Nearly every indigenous culture in the world tells 'trickster tales'. Prevalent in North America are stories about the infamous Coyote! ***Coyote Tales*** is a compilation of two hilarious stories and is performed with puppets, masks, and costumes inspired by Pacific Northwest Native American art.

How Coyote Kept His Name

Cast of Characters;

Old Man Spirit - chief of all chiefs, the creator of the world

Coyote - also referred to as '*The Trickster*' and '*The Imitator*', Coyote is a cunning animal person who wishes for respect but often makes foolish mistakes

Grizzly Bear - Chief of all the animals that walk on the land

Eagle - Chief of all the animals that fly in the sky

Salmon - Chief of all the animals that live in the water

Fox - Coyote's twin, as cunning as Coyote but far more thoughtful and a great deal wiser. Because they are twins, Fox is often the only animal person willing to help Coyote.

Synopsis

Adapted from an Okanagan tale, ***How Coyote Kept his Name*** takes place before the time of human beings, when animals walked the earth and interacted with one another much the way we do now. Although well known amongst the other animal people, because of his own foolishness, Coyote is not well respected and is often laughed at. When the chance comes to choose a new name, Coyote is determined to leave his reputation behind and take on a new name; one that will give him the power and respect he craves. But will he undo his own best efforts yet again?

Coyote and the Cedar Tree

Cast of Additional Characters;

Human - A greedy person who dislikes and distrusts Coyote

Raven - A friend of Coyote who has terrible eyesight

Woodpecker - A hopeless romantic who dislikes and distrusts Coyote

Synopsis

In *Coyote and the Cedar Tree* (adapted from a Clatsop/Chinook tale) Coyote is up to his old games and when he attempts to pull a fast one on Human, he once again finds himself caught in his own trap. In hopes of being freed, Coyote tries his wily ways on Raven and Woodpecker. Eventually our hero escapes, but as in most trickster tales, getting there is half the fun... at least for the audience.

Vocabulary

Foolish - lack of good sense or judgment; unwise.

Respect - a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities, or achievements.

Brilliant - exceptionally clever or talented.

Potlatch - a gift-giving feast practiced by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast of Canada and the United States.

Hiaqua - Beads or shells, valued as ornaments and traded like money.

Style of Puppetry/Mask

Coyote Tales incorporates varying styles of puppetry and mask including variations of bunraku and rod puppets and traditional masks as well as hat-style masks. The design of each piece was inspired by the art and/or performance style of different Northwest Native American tribes.

Who is Coyote?

Coyote is a major mythological figure for most Native American tribes, especially those west of the Mississippi. Like real coyotes, the mythological Coyote is well known for his crafty intelligence, stealth, and voracious appetite. However, Coyote's role can vary widely from tribe to tribe. In some Native American Coyote myths, Coyote is a revered cultural hero who creates, teaches, and helps humans; in others, he is a sort of antihero who demonstrates the dangers of negative behaviors like greed, recklessness, and arrogance; in still others, he is a comic trickster character, whose lack of wisdom gets him into trouble while his cleverness gets him back out. In some Native coyote stories, he is even some sort of combination of all three at once. Coyote is considered by some tribes to be a sort of spiritual chief of human beings, meaning that we learn how to be from his stories, though most often, we learn the most valuable lessons from his mistakes.

Raven Stories



If you were to travel to the coastal regions of Northern Washington and Southern Canada you wouldn't be hearing trickster tales about Coyote. Instead, you'd be hearing very similar stories about Raven. Raven stories exist in nearly all of the First Nations throughout the region but are most prominent in the tales of the Tlingit and Tahltan people.

Much like Coyote stories, each culture's stories of Raven are different but certain attributes of Raven remain the same and in almost all of them, Raven's character is very much like Coyote's.

Raven is always a magical creature able to take the form of human, animal, even inanimate objects. He is a keeper of secrets, and a trickster often focused on satisfying his own desires. His stories tell of how worldly things came to be or offer suggestion to children on how to behave. Much like Coyote, Raven's creative nature shows itself through the desire to satisfy his own needs, rather than any altruistic principles. Raven is both the protagonist among the stories of some groups, and the antagonist of others; he is a hero and an amusement and just as we do from Coyote, we learn from his mistakes.

Cedar Trees in NW Native American Culture



The Salish Peoples, who are comprised of several First Nations/Native American groups in the coastal regions of the Pacific Northwest, have many names for Western red cedar including "Long Life Giver", "Rich Woman Maker" and "Mother." Northwest Coastal Native People have artfully fashioned grand longhouses, swift and rot-resistant canoes, durable clothing, watertight baskets, cordage, tools, art, medicine and many other things from cedar. It made possible the rich culture and

historic wealth of Northwest Coastal Indian People through providing for them from birth to death. Cedar bark is prized for its durability, flexibility and water resistance. It is peeled from trees with straight trunks by making a single cut and pulling upward on the trunk. Strips can be as long as 27 feet and are carefully separate into layers. Soft fibers have been used for clothing, mats, napkins and towels. Weavers create beautiful ornate cedar baskets and hats from narrow strands of cedar bark. Outer cedar roots are dug and used in basket making.

Branches were traditionally made into rope, fish traps, binding material and baskets. Many native people who do not have cedar trees on reservations gain access through state and federal land partnerships. Protocols for gathering during the correct season, methods for gathering, and ways to honor the tree are still practiced. When walking in the woods you might notice missing strips of bark that can be new or very old. If done correctly, the tree continues to thrive. Older cedar trees are rare and should be protected resources for native people since they are so significant to the culture.

Coastal native peoples use cedar leaf and bark for a wide array of illnesses. The leaves were a popular internal and external medicine for rheumatism. They have also been infused for cough medicine, tuberculosis and fevers. The pitch was used as chewing gum. The leaves make wonderful incense and are used in smudging for purification.



The People Who Created the Stories...



Okanagan Tribe

(The following information was found at www.bigorrin.org)

- How do you pronounce the word "Okanagan"? What does it mean?

Okanagan is pronounced "oh-kuh-nah-gun." This is an English pronunciation of the Salishan place name Ukwnaqin. It is spelled many different ways in English, including Okanogan and Okanagon. But in their own language, the people call themselves Syilx or Silx.

- Where do the Okanagans live?

The Okanagan Indians are original people of the Northwest. They live in Washington state and British Columbia, Canada.

- How is the Okanagan Indian nation organized?

The Okanagans live on a reservation, which is land that belongs to them and is under their control. The Okanagan Nation has its own government, laws, police, and services, just like a small country. However, the Okanagans are also US citizens and must obey American law. In the past, each Okanagan band was led by a chief who was supported by a tribal council of elders, clan leaders, and other important men. Okanagan chiefs were highly respected, but didn't have a lot of political power. They had to listen to the tribal council most of the time. Today, Okanagan bands are still ruled by tribal councils, but councilmembers are elected by all the people and can include women as well as men.

- What language do the Okanagan Indians speak?

Almost all Okanagan people speak English today, but some Okanagan people, especially elders, also speak their native Okanagan language. Okanagan is a complicated language with many sounds that don't exist in English. If you'd like to know an easy Okanagan word, 'way' (sounds like the English word "why") is a friendly greeting in Okanagan.

Chinook Tribe

(The following information was found at www.bigorrin.org)

- How do you pronounce the word "Chinook"? What does it mean?

Chinook is pronounced "chih-nook." This is an English pronunciation of the Salishan place name Tsinuk, which was also the name used for the Chinook Jargon trade language.

- Where do the Chinooks live?

The Chinook Indians are original people of the Pacific Northwest Coast. They live in present-day Washington and Oregon.

- How is the Chinook Indian nation organized? Do they live on a reservation?

The Chinook Nation is not federally recognized by the United States. That means Chinook people do not have a reservation or live on tribal lands. They live scattered throughout towns and villages in Oregon and Washington state. Although most Chinook people belong to the Chinook Nation, not all of them do. Some Chinook people have joined together with members of other Northwest Coast tribes in the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

In the past, each Chinook village was led by its own local chief or headman, who was always a high-ranking clan leader. Today, the Chinook Indians are governed by a tribal council elected by all the people.

- What language do the Chinook Indians speak?

Chinook people all speak English today. In the past, they spoke their native Chinook language, which was a complicated language with many sounds that don't exist in English. Nobody speaks this language anymore. But some elders still speak a second language, called the Chinook Jargon, which was a trade language of the Northwest Coast that combined words and sounds from Chinook, Nootka, English, and other languages. If you'd like to know an easy Chinook Jargon word, "klahowya" (pronounced klah-how-yuh) is a friendly greeting.

Clatsop Tribe

(The following information was found at www.warpaths2peacepipes.com)

- Who were the Clatsop?

The Clatsop tribe were amongst the Native American Indians who changed the shape of their heads to a flat, elongated shape and nicknamed 'Flatheads' by the white traders. The Clatsop tribe were amongst the Native Indians encountered by the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805. The Clatsop were highly skilled fishers and traders who were located along the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean and lived in plank houses.

- What did the Clatsop eat?

The Clatsop tribe were great fish-eaters, and believed that the salmon were a divine gift from the wolf-spirit Talapus. The wolf-spirit Talapus was believed to have created the salmon to save their people from extinction at a legendary time of near disaster. The Clatsop tribe celebrated the 'First Salmon feast' which honored the salmon.

- What transportation did the Clatsop use?

The Clatsop tribe used dugout canoes made from the from hollowed-out logs of cedar trees. The men hollowed logs with fire and then bark was stretched over a lightweight, wooden frame to make the canoe that could be easily steered. The dugout canoe was perfect for travel along fast streams and shallow waters and were sturdy enough for the rough waters of the Columbia River.

World View of the Story

'How Things Came to Be' Stories

Every indigenous culture from around the world came up with their own explanations of how things came to be, i.e.; *how the sun, moon, and stars came to shine in the sky, or why the ostrich buries its head in the sand*. These explanations often take the form of stories that were passed down through many, many generations.

Exercise

Creating our own creation stories is a wonderful exercise for both our imaginations and our understanding of ancient peoples. We suggest these two creative writing assignments;

- 1) Students choose their own subject and write a story explaining how something came to be.
- 2) Students are given the same subject to write their own individual creation stories about. For this exercise, it is imperative that students share their stories with one another so that they may experience all the varying ideas that have emerged from the group.

(Younger students may illustrate their stories and tell them in the great oral tradition.)

Trickster Tales

Trickster Tales are often funny, always entertaining and are be a wonderful set of stories to compare and contrast.

What is a 'trickster tale'?

- a story with a leading character who is often an animal with human traits and magical powers
- at the same time being wise and a fool, "the trickster-hero serves as a sort of folkloric scapegoat onto which are projected the fears, failures, and unattained ideals of the source culture." (from britannica.com)
- convey folk wisdom, especially helping us understand human behavior within a culture
- historically used to teach lessons to young children about the values held in a community
- the trickster plays tricks but also is the victim of tricks

There are hundreds of different Trickster from cultures all around the world. Here is a small list of characters you might recognize;

- **Anansi the Spider** from *West Africa/Caribbean*
- **Sungura the Hare** from *East Africa*
- **Brer Rabbit** (*considered the great, great grandson of Sungura the Hare*) from *the southern United States*
- **Punch** (*Punch & Judy*) from *England*
- **Monkey King** from *China*

Thoughtful Questions

- If I was an animal which one would I be?
- What traits do I have in common with this animal?

About Tears of Joy Theatre

Tears of Joy Theatre brings amazing puppet theatre to audiences throughout the U.S. and abroad. Founded in 1971, the theatre is recognized nationally for its commitment to excellence and innovation. Four of the theatre's productions have received the highest honor in American puppetry, The Citation of Excellence in the Art of Puppetry from UNIMA-USA.

The mission of Tears of Joy Theatre is to produce, develop and present puppet theatre that celebrates the diversity of world cultures, and to teach children and enrich their lives by helping them experience, create and perform art with professional artists. Follow us online at <https://www.facebook.com/tearsofjoytheatre/>