

# Native American Stories

This lesson was developed as part of an Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Washington State Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform (LASER) project funded through an EPA Region 10 grant. This lesson plan provides information and lesson ideas for the optional Native American story component of the science and sustainability lessons developed through the EPA grant. The stories were told by Roger Fernandes of the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe. Mr. Fernandes has been given permission by the tribes to tell these stories.

Grade: 1-5



# Native American Story Connections

*The Earth does not belong to man, Man  
belongs to the Earth - Chief Sealth (Se-ahts)*

## Lesson Summary

This lesson plan provides information and lesson ideas for the optional Native American story part of the science and sustainability lessons developed through an EPA grant. The stories were told by Roger Fernandes of the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe. Mr. Fernandes has been given permission by the tribes to tell these stories.

## Materials

Native American Place Names and Federally Recognized Tribes (PDF)

The recorded stories and video can be accessed at <https://www.wastatelaser.org/environmental-sustainability-enhanced-lessons/>

## Stories Connected to Instructional Materials

Science Instructional Materials	Native American Story (Tribe/Location) Time
<b>New Plants</b> (FOSS) (Grade K-1)	<b>The Huckleberry Medicine</b> (Puget Sound, Western WA) 3.00 mins <b>Coyote and Bear</b> (All tribes, Eastern WA) 2.33 mins <b>Beaver and Field Mouse</b> (Tulalip, Western WA) 3.38 mins <b>i-i-esh</b> (Yakima, Eastern WA) 7.15 mins
<b>Structures of Life</b> (FOSS) (Grade 3-4)	<b>Blue Jay and Bear</b> (Chehalis, Western WA) 5.32 mins <b>The Coming of Slahal</b> (All tribes, Western WA) 6.01mins <b>How Fire Came to Earth</b> (All tribes, Eastern WA) 5.11 mins
<b>Land and Water</b> (STC) (Grade 4-5)	<b>Changer and Dog Salmon</b> (All tribes, Western WA) 2.27 mins <b>Father Ocean</b> (All tribes, Western WA) 1.17 mins <b>The Gossiping Clam</b> (Puget Sound, Western WA) 3.28 mins <b>Columbia River Story</b> (All tribes, Eastern WA) 7.48 mins <b>Coyote’s Deal with the Wind</b> (Spokane. Eastern WA) 1.52 mins

### Background for the Teacher

#### *Why use Native American stories in the science and sustainability lessons?*

The tribes of Washington State are part of a sovereign nation, meaning that they have the inherent and legal right to govern themselves and the natural resources in the state. Treaties, which are the supreme law of the land, negotiated with the federal government make tribal sovereignty a legal fact. In addition, this sovereignty makes Native Americans co-managers (along with the state) of natural resources (fish, animals, trees, etc.). Therefore, because of tribal sovereignty and the co-manager status of Native Americans, it can be argued that their stories and perspectives on natural resources and the environment are an important and helpful perspective for the students of our state to understand. These Native American stories about people and the land are important for us to know and helpful in making sense of the natural and human world.

In addition, a main focus of the EPA grant which funded this project is to engage Native American students in science and sustainability education. Using these stories as an entry point is one way to accomplish this objective.

Your students might ask, “Is that story true?” According to Native American storytellers, there are two kinds of truth: the truth that we think (mind) and the truth that we feel (heart). These stories are heart stories and reflect the kind of truth that one feels rather than thinks.

Native American stories often tell people how to live in the environment. In Native American culture, one purpose of stories is to convey a “teaching” about something that is important and true for Native American people. Often these teachings are about how to live in the world.

You may want to view the video of Roger Fenandes speaking about story-telling. This video provides an overview of a Native American perspective on stories and their role in Native American culture. This video can be used as teacher background information or can be shown to the students after listening to the story.

### ***When to introduce the stories***

Ideally the stories can be used to introduce the science and sustainability lesson. However you may decide to introduce the story somewhere in the middle of the science lesson.

### **Lesson Steps**

#### **Before the students listen to the story:**

1. Tell the students they are going to listen to a Native American story from the [name] tribe who live or lived in the [name] region of the state. You may want to show them the tribal map and point out where the tribe is from.
2. You may want to provide this background information before listening to the story:
  - a) Stories have always been a way for people to make sense of the world around them.
  - b) Native Americans have many stories that explain a way of knowing the world and how to live in that world.
  - c) This story represents a different way of knowing that American Indian people in our region have used. Other cultures have stories that represent ways of knowing.
  - d) Stories can help us understand and make sense of natural phenomenon or things that happen in the natural and human world.
3. Ask them to listen carefully and quietly to the story and think about what the story might be teaching. You may want to have them sit in a circle on the floor and close their eyes so that they don't get distracted.

### After the students listen to the story:

4. Have a discussion with the class using one or more of these questions:
  - a) What does this story mean to you?
  - b) What do you think it is about? What do you feel it is about? How does it make you feel?
  - c) What might be the “teaching” in this story (message or big idea)?
  - d) What can we learn from this story that helps us understand the scientific world or the connection between people and the natural world?
  - e) What does the story tell us about the natural world and or the science concept (e.g., structures of life)?
  - f) What questions do you have about the story?
  - g) What questions might a scientist ask about this story?
  - h) Do you ever tell stories or listen to stories?
  - i) Is there a story from your culture that tells a similar story?
  - j) Why is this story told rather than written down? What is the power of an oral story versus a written story?
5. Other things to do after the story:
  - a) Have the students draw a picture of the story.
  - b) Retell the story to someone else (at home or to a friend)
  - c) Develop and tell your own story that has a teaching or message.

### Additional Resources

- Book “Keepers of the Plants” by Joseph Bruhach
- Books on Indigenous Thinking, by Gregory Cajete
- Map of the tribes

### Teacher Reflection

After teaching the lesson spend some time reflecting on how the lesson went, whether students, met the objectives, and what adjustments you would do if and when you (or your colleagues) teach the lesson again.

### Accessing Lesson Online

<https://www.wastatelaser.org/environmental-sustainability-enhanced-lessons/>