



# Local Stories that Connect us to Land and Ways of Being

Stories for telling aloud

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Contributed by Indigenous students in Camosun College's Early Childhood Learning and Care program.

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*“The truth about stories is that that's all we are.” Tom King*

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## Introduction

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**R**ona suggested that we begin this introduction with “On behalf of the first Indigenous ECE cohort and their instructor, we are offering you this book of Indigenous stories that was gathered together by our cohort”. And so we do... I like this beginning, especially the word *offer*. To offer something suggests we have something of value that we are willing to share with you, the reader, our audience. We have worked together to gather these stories, to begin to think about telling stories in our early childhood programs and how we might share them with children. Of course, the process of gathering these stories is also a story which continues to unfold. We gathered stories from the land which had been told for centuries and then we decided to collect stories of plants or trees. Our project grew!

Jolene felt it was important to tell these stories because “we need to bring more narrations for all walks to learn about the lands they walk on. I remember JB's [a local knowledge keeper] talks about the tree people and our elders' way of guiding people towards self-awareness. In many discussions in class, if we held back in our fear, we neglected learning.” Fear can stop us, but stories can offer teachings of courage. These stories represent wisdom that has been shared over time to offer knowledge, inspiration and direction. Jerry-Lyn reminds us that it is important to future generations to learn more about the land

Emily suggested that “An Indigenous view would be teaching the children to have respect for mother nature as she is alive like us. I like to tell children not to pick plants without reason, instead we can be gentle and observe or pick up ones that have fallen. If we are allowed to take from the area then it is important to ask first and then give thanks to Mother Nature. When harvesting medicine you always practice acknowledgment as well as never taking too much. Only what you need so the forest can continue to prosper.” I hope all children can learn these lessons as they will be so important for the world and all its relations. Telling stories of the land teaches children they are in relationship to all that surrounds them and they must be respectful and careful.

We offer stories of plants and trees, because as Savanna said they offer us “good medicine in the broadest sense”. Plants were respected and loved for thousands of years for the healing they brought on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. Lynai’s teachings from her Aunties highlights the many uses of nettles. Jerry-Lyn reminded us that plants work together in teas and remedies just as stories work together to give us a full rich picture and can be medicine.

Jolene reminded us that you should harvest plants only if you know what you are doing. There are optimal times to pick them, methods of harvesting and protocols to follow when gathering plants and using them. Learning from a knowledge keeper will ensure adherence to correct use of various plants. They offer us good medicine if we know what we are doing and can be unkind to us if we don’t know. Knowledge keepers also know where to find plants and how much can be harvested so that the plant continues to thrive.

I think we have learned a great deal with this investigation and collection of stories. We offer them here with the understanding that you will acknowledge this book when you read the stories. Stories gather wisdom as they travel so we must tell them with a good heart and good mind.

Enid Elliot

## Rona: *Arbutus Tree, from Rona's sister*<sup>1</sup>

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**T**he arbutus is a hard, hard wood and it lives on top of the mountains. Or along the shores in a rocky place so when it has a drink it holds lots of water. Its name is KEKEILC the drinking tree.

So the hard hard wood is a sacred tree for us because in Saanich it became a sacred tree in the time of the great flood when our people had to go to the LAU,WELNEW Mountain they had to tie their selves to that mountain that was the highest point of land where the big Arbutus tree where the Saanich people tie their selves on there and they were able to survive because the Arbutus tree was the anchor to that mountain.

So when the floodwaters finally receded they untied their anchor rope and they thanked the tree and said from now you will be a sacred tree to us and from now on we won't burn you in the fire. So it was like a promise to the KEKEILC tree that its not gonna get burned by the Saanich people so even today you will find branches and pieces of Arbutus laying around in peoples' yards because they don't want to burn it.

This wood is useful for making tool handles, adze handles, hammers, and mauls. Because it is such hard wood and good to carve when it's wet it is useful to carve, but you have to carve it when it is green and it is useful for spoons, ladles, and bowls

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<sup>1</sup> E. Samantha Etzel

because once it gets hard you will never be able to carve it again. There are a couple of medicinal uses; the leaves are used for sore throats, you can chew the nice clean leaves on the arbutus trees for a sore throat and the bark is used for steam pit cooking. It is used as a flavour and a cover when you are cooking Camas. Or when you want a certain flavour and also it makes a really pretty colour.

## **Rona: Clam's Creation Story, from Rona's sister<sup>2</sup>**

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**T**he Creator walked all around this place with our ancestors, and taught our people how to live on our land, and how to respect and live with everything in nature. Sometimes he would change people into things like a mountain, change them into a bird, into an animal or something and the people came to know that the Creator was that way. If he was coming he could change somebody. Sometimes he changed them because they did something wrong. Sometimes he changed them because they did something good.

This story is about the clam people: the SWAAM, S,OXE, SQLAI, STLO,EM, the horse clam, the butter clam, the little necks and the cockles. They all live at different depths and this is how they came to be. They heard XALS was near by. They said "Do you want to get changed?" "No, I don't want to get changed." "What are we gonna do?" "What if XALS changes us?"

Of course, XALS always could hear everybody speaking and he was listening to their plans. So they went down to the beach and they dug some pits down there and hid down the pits in a big hole. And they were kind of lined up from the deepest part of the beach to the more shallow part of the beach. They were hiding there and XALS came there in a canoe and landed on the shore.

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<sup>2</sup> E. Samantha Etzel

He got out of his canoe and pulled it up and he walked up to the hole and looked down in that hole and said “What are you doing down in that hole? Why are you in that hole there?” and they said, “XALS might come here today and if he comes we don’t want him to see us down here.” And they were talking to XALS and they didn’t realize that.

And he said “Why would you hide from XALS?” and they said “Well, we don’t want to get changed, he’s changing some people and we don’t want to get changed.” So XALS says to them, “Don’t you think if XALS wants to change you that it’s gonna be the good of all and that’s why he’s gonna change you?” so he said “Since you like to stay down in that hole there then that’s where you are gonna stay from now on”. And he splashed them with salt water and changed them.

So he changed them into the SWAAM, S,OXE, SQLAO, STLO,EM and so the SWAAM is the elusive one if you interpret its name. The S,OXE is like a question “why do you go there?” and the SQLAI the little neck means for hunger, and the STLO,EM means enough of the little ones.

So that is how they got their names. When we go digging for clams we say, “YA SEN XEXALS” I am going to dig clams. XEXALS actually means caused by the Creator and it has come to, it has evolved to meaning dig clams but originally it meant caused by the Creator, but we still use it in the language today XEXALS caused by the creator or dig clams.

## **Enid: From *Saanich Ethnobotany*,**

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**T**his is the story of a human the Creator changed and made her different.

Long ago CIIYE was picking berries. She was picking blueberries. There were lots of blueberries everywhere. CIIYE was really happy she gave thanks to the great spirit and a prayer.

The Creator listened to her prayers. The Creator appeared to CIIYE that day. The Creator said “You are always working hard CIIYE. You are always thinking of the future and putting food away, you are always giving thanks. I want your ways to be remembered for a long time on this land and so today I will change you CIIYE and make you blue like the blue on your hands.” And so the Creator changed CIIYE that day long ago.

The Saanich people should think of the future and put food away and give thanks for everything on the land/earth.

These teachings are from CIIYE these values. CIIYE was a human being and she still is and that's how we should think of her. So when we hear her say her name CIIYE should remind us of those days, when those teachings were given by the Creator. When we hear in the bush saying her name CIIYE CIIYE we should be thinking of her as a human but also a bird. And that she is there to remind us of something. Remind us to be hardworking, thankful and to think about the future.

## How Douglas Fir got Pitch from Saanich Ethnobotany

Pitch used to go fishing before the sun rose, and retire to the shade before it became strong. One day he was late and had just reached the beach when he melted. Other people rushed to share him. Fir [*Douglas Fir*] arrived first and secured most of the pitch, which he poured over his head and body. Balsam [*Grand Fir*] obtained only a little and by the time Arbutus arrived there was none left.

Arbutus said, “I shall have to peel my skin every year and have a good wash to keep me clean.”

But just then XELS appeared and said, “You shall all be trees and Fir shall be your boss.”

So now the Arbutus sheds its bark every year and [*Douglas-*] fir has more pitch than any other tree.

## Origin of Salmon from Saanich Ethnobotany

Once there were no seals and the people were starving; they lived on elk and whatever other game they could kill. Two brave youths said to each other, “Let us go and see if we can find any salmon.” They embarked in their canoe and headed out to sea, not caring in what direction they travelled. Then they came to a strange country. When they reached the shore a man came out and welcomed them, saying, “You have arrived.”

“We have arrived,” the youths answered, though they did not know where they were.

They were given food to eat and after they had eaten their host led them outside the house and said, “Look around and see what you can see.”

They looked around and saw smoke from KEXMIN [*wild celery*] that the Steelhead, Sockeye, Spring and other varieties of salmon were burning, each for itself in their houses.

The youths stayed in the place about a month. Their hosts then said to them "You must go home tomorrow. Everything is arranged for you. The salmon you were looking for will muster at your home and start off on their journey. You must follow them."

So the youths followed the salmon; for three and a half month they travelled by day and night, with the fish. Every night they took KEXMIN and burned it that the salmon might feed on its smoke and sustain themselves. Finally they reached *Ktces* [*Discovery Island and Chatham Islands*] where they burned KEXMIN all along the beach; for their hosts had said to them, "Burn KEXMIN along the beach when you reach land, to feed the salmon that travel with you. Then if you treat the salmon well, you will always have them in abundance."

Now they had plenty of salmon at Discovery Island they let them go to other places—to the Fraser River, Nanaimo, etc. Because their journey took three and a half months the salmon are now absent on the coast for that period.

The Coho said to the other salmon, "You can go ahead of us for we have not yet got what we wanted from the lakes." That is why the Coho is always the last of the salmon.

The young men now had the salmon, but no good way of catching them. The leaders of the salmon, a real man and woman, taught them how to make SXOLE [*reef nets*] and how to use KEXMIN. They also told the young men how their people should dress when they caught the salmon, and they should start to use their purse net in July, when the berries were ripe. So today, when the Indians dry their salmon, they always burn some KEXMIN on the fire (or on top of the stove); and they put a little in the fish that they cook. Also when they cut up the salmon, before inserting the knife they pray to the salmon, that they may always be plentiful.

**Note:** the WSANEC name KEXMIN apparently comes from SKEX meaning to "put a curse on someone". According to Dr Earl Claxton Sr., this plant is used to protect someone from a curse and from evil thoughts.

Turner, N. J., & Hebda, R. J. (2012). *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the WSANEC People*. Royal BC Museum.

## Jolene: A story from JB Williams

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**J**B Williams told us the story of his talking stick which had the carvings of old man Winter in three moods of happy, sad and angry.

There were not many differences in the three faces carved on the staff, JB tells us that;

*Old man winter suffered many losses from his sons being lost at sea, as well as losing his many wives.*

*This made him angry at the world, and sometime we feel his wrath and anger through the winter storms he sends us today.*

From JB as well--Arbutus Bark can be used to help relax you before bed. I call it giggle tea. Use the size of your pinkie finger to gage the amount you need to use. In some people, it induces the giggles! It can also give a vibrant colour to rice if you boil it.

## **Jerry-Lyn: Local Story LÁUWELNEW told by Earl Claxton (YELKÁTTE) and John Elliott (STOLČEL)**

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**I**n the beginning, XÁLS (our Creator) taught the Saanich people how to take care of this land. For many years, the Saanich remembered XÁLS words. They were happy and had plenty of food.

But as many years passed, some people broke XÁLS words and forgot his teachings.

XÁLS became unhappy and told the people that there would be a flood over the land. They were to prepare.

They prepared a long rope of cedar bark. They gathered food and possessions. The tide waters began to rise. The people packed their belongings into their canoes.

Some people did not heed XÁLS teachings. They were not prepared and were washed away. Their canoes were destroyed.

The water rose higher and higher.

They tied themselves to an arbutus tree on top of the mountain.

Soon the tops of the trees were covered with water. They were afraid and prayed to survive the great flood. They asked XÁLS to take pity on them.

After many days, a crow came and landed on the bow of the canoe. He was carrying a stick and was talking to the people. The crow had brought the good news. The people paddled to the highest mountain nearby. The trees were still above the water.

Suddenly a mountain began to emerge in the distance. One of the men said, “NI QENNET TFE WSÁNEĆ” [translated means, *Look at what is emerging*], as he pointed to the mountain emerging in the distance.

Before they left the mountain, they gathered around the huge coil of cedar rope and gave thanks. They said from now on this mountain will be called ŁÁU,WELNEW [*place of refuge, escape, healing*]. They further said we will be called WSÁNEĆ.

XÁLS heard their prayers. XÁLS said he would not punish the people by flood again.

The good people who were saved are the ancestors of the Saanich Tribe today.

This is our heritage.

## Jerry-Lyn: Told by John Elliott (STOLȻEL)

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**B**lue Grouse was very plentiful at one time here in WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) territory, and it was most plentiful at SNITȻEŁ [*known as Tod Inlet today*]. Our Saanich ancestors could go out to gather the Blue Grouse just with a basket and a stick; because there was so many that they had become tame and wouldn't even fly away. Plentiful amount of Blue Grouse is a sign of a healthy environment.

SNITȻEŁ is very important because of its location. Protected from all winds, the water is calm even throughout the winter and bad weather season. SNITȻEŁ became the doorway to the winter deer hunting grounds at WMÍYETEN [*known as McKenzie Bay and Mt. Work area today*]. The shores at SNITȻEŁ are calm and steep; harvesting can be done even on a small tide.

Spring salmon return to the small stream WEĆEĆE [*little awakener*] at the head of the inlet.

WSÁNEĆ people trolled to SNITȻEŁ by canoe for fresh food in the winter months. If you ever have the opportunity to go to SNITȻEŁ by canoe or boat, do it. It has a way of closing in on you as you enter this nice little inlet, it's a special feeling. This place was also a special training ground for young warriors.

SNITȻEŁ is one of the oldest Saanich village sites. It is the original village site and it is protected by the Douglas Treaty.

## Emily: Presentation about Totem Poles

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I plan to have the teachers and I walk out with the children so we can gather in front of the three Totem Poles that surround the entrance of VNFC. It would be nice to bring some blankets out so children can sit if they like.

Then I would like to start out by asking:-

- What do you know about these three wood poles in front of us?-
- You have seen these Totem Poles here at VNFC, have you seen Totem Poles anywhere else? \* Beacon Hill, The Museum, Parliament Building-
- Totem poles are cut down and carved trees created by Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest to represent varying things such as ancestry, families, clans, stories, history, and to welcome or unwelcome guests of the land.-
- They are typically created from red or yellow cedar because they are naturally rot resistant trees that have straight grains and are easy to carve.-
- Before harvesting a tree to make a Totem Pole, many Coastal Indigenous people will have a ceremony before they harvest the tree to show thankfulness.
- Trees are living things and have their own personality and need to be treated with respect.

Artists will usually have an idea of what they want to carve and for what reason but, “The energy of the Totem Pole seems to come alive as you follow some of the natural groves and colouring of the tree.”

**Middle Pole:** In 2011 on June 21st the first Totem Pole was raised here at VNFC. It was carved by Carey Newman and represents the Coast Salish People [*Southern Island*], “The totem embodies the interconnected nature of the world symbolized by the weaving of the roots that join together both animal and human figures.” [*100s of people attended to watch the raising*]

**Right Pole:** In 2012 on October 26th the second Totem Pole was raised representing, Kwakwaka’wakw Nation [*Eastern Vancouver Island*] carved again by Master Carver Carey Newman.-

**Left Pole:** The latest totem pole was raised in 2016 and is a Nuu-chah-nulth [*Western Vancouver Island*] totem pole carved by Master Carver Moy Sutherland who was commissioned by the VNFC. This totem pole’s theme is: “Transformation: Everything transforms into something.”

## Extra note

**The 13 moons**—The WSÁNEĆ year is divided into 13 moons that represent not calendar months but social, cultural, economic and spiritual practices that correspond with the weather and cycle of seasons.

History of the VNFC. (2020). <https://vnfc50.ca/history.php>

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CBC Kids. (2020). 14 totally terrific totem pole facts.<https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/14-totally-terrific-totem-pole-facts>

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# Robert YELKÁTTE Clifford: Saanich Law and the Trans- Mountain Pipeline Expansion

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“WSÁNEĆ law requires that we act to protect our homelands and other beings within them, including islands, salmon, whales, water and others. This is a positive obligation within our law. In WSÁNEĆ, our laws and beliefs are intimately connected. In fact, in the WSÁNEĆ language (SENĆOTEN), the word “SKÁLS” means both “laws” and “beliefs.” As with any law, how we see the world and envision ourselves within it directly structures our standards of judgment”

“Similar points can be made regarding the way WSÁNEĆ sea water. SŁEMEW [*Grandfather Rain*] was the first WSÁNEĆ man who came to the earth in the form of rain and helped form the world. He helped carve the lakes and rivers – without water, there is no life. In SENĆOTEN, we use the word “KO” for water. However, during ceremony, when we are bathing and cleansing ourselves in cold water while offering prayer, we refer to water as “SŁEMEW” to honour our creation story and the relationship it speaks to. Again, this orientation structures our law and standards of judgment; it is why we see water as sacred and as

needing to be protected and kept pure from harm to maintain its cleansing properties.”

My late grandfather recalled words his father spoke to him while visiting a river in WSÁNEĆ. He said that “the river is a living thing, and if you listen, he will speak to you.” In the same way, a southern resident killer whale named J35, who carried the body of her dead calf for 17 days, was telling us something. For those who were listening, she was telling us that we have responsibilities we are not meeting.

*from <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/saanich-law-and-trans-mountain-pipeline-expansion>*

**From May Sam: she was told “you have a backbone so bend down and use it.”**

# Lynai: Stories told by *Lagius* of the *Dzawada'enuxw*

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## Raven and the Feasts

**A**fter arriving there, Squirrel went about and invited all the people to a feast he was going to give. Raven asked, “What in the world are you going to give. You have nothing. I guess you are going to feed us some decayed wood, or some branches. Everybody came, and squirrel prepared quite nicely some cones of the white pine.

The people liked it, but did not know what it was. Mink ate a large quantity. The next day another man gave a feast. It was mink.

Raven said: “What can he give us. I guess it will be nothing but sea-eggs”. Many feasts followed, each man providing what he himself was accustomed to eat. After one of clams, given by Raccoon, someone suggested “I think Raven had better stay home and not come to feasts. He eats everything there is, and we never get our share”. All agreed that Raven was not to be invited again.

When he heard of it, and that Kingfisher had been shooting and had secured a great number of porpoises for a feast, he was very sad. He pretended he was ill, and went to bed. He studied the

matter over, saying to himself: "What can I do to get some of those porpoises?"

Everybody was at the feast and having a good time. Raven could bear it no longer. He got up and went to the house of Kingfisher. All over his clothes he had tied sticks, of all lengths and sizes. He entered the house, dancing. He danced a while at the door, and then suddenly disappeared through the floor. Soon he appeared again, and danced to the other side of the fire, where he went through the floor again. He continued this for some time, and whenever he appeared he was sweating. The porpoises were steaming on the fireplace, all covered up. Everybody was so interested in watching Raven that they did not notice the sticks were becoming less. Through a passage underneath he had eaten a porpoise, and put a stick in its place, so the people above did not notice anything. The people now decided that they ought to let Raven have some of the meat, but he did not stay, so they proposed to send him some of it. They took off the covering, but found only the sticks Raven had put there, and a few bones.

The next day there was to be another feast. The people were now very angry, and did not invite Raven. Canary was giving a feast of fish-eggs. Everybody was there except Raven. The fish-eggs were cooking in buckets of water heated with stones. Raven was at home, and kept repeating: "Boil over, fish-eggs; boil over, fish-eggs." Some boiled over, and were spoiled, and the rest were cooked too much.

One of the people went to Raven and asked "What ought we to do with fish-eggs that are cooked too hard?"

Raven answered: "You cannot do much. That lot is spoiled. You will have to be more careful after this. Do not throw these out any old place. Find a nice, grassy spot to put them." They threw the fish-eggs away as Raven had instructed, and dried salmon was eaten at its feast. Raven had been watching, and when the eggs were thrown away he ate them.

Now the people began to see that they did not gain much by not having Raven at their feasts. They said, "We will have to invite

him after this. He is causing bad luck for us." The next feast was given by Deer, and Raven was asked to come. Deer had a large fire, and all the dishes ready. He sat down as if to warm himself and sang a song. He began to grow plump, until the fat hung from him in folds. His eyes could barely be seen. At length he began throwing up snot, and of this the feast consisted. Raven, not satisfied with his portion, ate off the dishes set before the others. He ate so fast that the rest secured only a very little.

Bear next gave a feast. He had a large fire, and did not use tongs, but his paws, to move the embers. The dishes were arranged around him but the guest did not know what they would have to eat. Bear washed his hands, using some brush in order to remove every particle of dirt. The fire was roaring. He put his hands before it, turning them once in a while. After a time oil began to drip from them, and with it he filled all the dishes.

Raven was watching this and thought it very clever. He thought he could do it too. The next day he announced a feast, and had a large fire ready. First he tried using his hands for stirring up the coals, as Bear had done, but he burned them. He then washed his hands, and held them before the fire. One drop fell, but that was water instead of oil, so the people went home hungry.

## Raven and Diver

**O**ne day Raven went to visit Diver, who he heard had caught a great quantity of herrings the day before. He took with him Sea-eggs. They were invited in, and sat down. Diver took four of the herrings, and began to roast them. Raven said to his friend, "Does she think I am going to be satisfied with those four little herrings? I always knew they were stingy, but never thought it was as bad as that."

Diver man was sitting near, watching. Raven continued: "You better not eat. This is not enough for me, and I will eat it alone." Sea-eggs consented. Raven began eating, but whenever he finished one, another appeared in its place, so there were always four herrings on the plate. Sea-eggs was now allowed to eat too.

They kept on for a long time, but found they could not finish. When they had enough Raven asked Diver, "How do you catch these fish. I would like to know."

He answered, "I have no trouble catching them. I take that board you are sitting on. It is rather heavy and thick. I go in a canoe to where the herrings are, stick the board partway into the water, pointing downward, and force it down into the water as hard as I can, and then do not move from the place. The board comes back, just passing my head, and I pick up the herrings that come with it."

Raven said, "I have one of these boards. I am going to try it tomorrow. I will start early." Next morning he and his friend took a canoe and a board, and went out to catch herring. He followed instructions, and when the board came up it just missed his head, and killed one herring. He tried again, using more strength. This time the board, rising, struck him between the eyes and stunned him, and Sea-eggs took him home.

### **Raven and the Dead Seal**

**R**aven's mother told him that his cousin, Small Crow, had found a dead seal, brought it home, and intended to cook it -- 28 for a feast. Raven said, "I do not think I will be able to go to that feast as I am very sick." Small Crow was a medicine woman. Raven yelled as if in pain, and complained of cramps.

His wife suggested, "I think we should call the doctor, and told her that their father was very ill. She came, and sat down by the fire, looking at him. She said, "There is something the matter with him, but I cannot tell that it is." He again complained of having a severe cramp. Small Crow said, "I am sure I can fix you up all right."

Raven suggested, "Let me alone for a little while. I want to go out. When I come back you can treat me." The wife told the children to help him. They did so, but outside of the door he roughly told them to go back, that he did not want them hanging

around him. He added, "When you go in, shut the door, and do not come out again Stay in the house."

Raven ran quickly to where the dead seal was, and began eating, Sometime later he was heard making a noise, such as Ravens do when they find something to eat. Small Crow, hearing it, hurried to her seal, but found he had eaten a large part of it, but with some help saved the remainder from him.

## Raven and the Berries

**O**ne day a number of bird women came to Raven, and said, "Lend us your canoe. We want to take a lot of berries to some friends. We have a lot of berries that we have picked." Raven answered, "If you took my canoe you folks would spoil it. But you can use it if you will let me go with you."

They agreed, "Yes come along. We will take you."

They filled the canoe with berries, and started. The women were Raven's cousins. When they had covered half the journey, Raven complained, "I am tired of sitting here. I want to go ashore. Let us rest on the shore here for a little while."

The party landed, and Raven walked up the beach a little way, until he got out of sight around a point. Here he gathered some moss, and to it he said, "I want you to call out. I want you to say, I see a warrior coming along." The moss was unable to repeat this after him Raven threatened, "If you do not say it right, I am going to tear you to pieces." The moss tried again, and this time succeeded. Raven went on, "When we get around that point up there, say, 'I see warriors coming behind you.'"

Raven went back to the women, and all started again in the canoe. As they were rounding the point, Moss called out, "I see warriors coming behind you."

Raven asked, "Did you hear that? I heard something!" They listened and heard the same words. Raven suggested, "You have no chance at all. We must go ashore here, and make for the

woods. Do not look back, and go as fast as you can. I will stay here. I know how to handle them when they come."

The women did as told, and when they had gone Raven began eating the berries. He finished one basket after another, until there were none left. One of the women, Snail, climbed a tree, and saw what Raven had done. Raven now called to the women to come back, as the danger was over. Before they returned Raven found a shell, opened it, and dabbed some of the red fluid on his side, to appear like a wound, and also stuck on some of the intestine-like feeders, to make it look as if his own intestines were protruding,

When the women appeared he lay on the ground, apparently very weak. The first one said, "He said he knew all about fighting, and here he is killed." She began to wail. The others now came and all thought him dead. Snail was the last one. She said, "Do not cry anymore. This cousin is a bad fellow. This is all just made up. He made us believe warriors were coming, so he could eat the berries. Look in the canoe. There is not a berry left. This wound is something he fixed up himself." She pulled off the imitation intestines.

Seeing this, all the others became very angry, and all went at him, scratching, biting, and jumping on him. After giving him a thorough thrashing the women went home.

## **Wren and Woodpecker**

**T**he Thunderbird people had heard much of Mrs. WoodPecker and Wren that she was very handsome, Thunderbird wanted to see her. Raven heard of this, Woodpecker told Wren to stay in the house, as Thunderbird was coming. When he appeared at the beach of Raven's village, all the people went down to welcome him. When he asked what he wanted, he said, "I want to see Woodpecker, to play a few games with him."

They asked, "what kind of games do you want to have." He answered, "I want to play the ring game." It was decided to play this game, and the contestants secured their rings and sticks.

Thunderbird threw his ring first. When it left his hand it became enclosed in a mist, so Woodpecker could not see it. He was puzzled as to what to do. He had control of the fog, so he surrounded his ring with fog when throwing it. Thus neither had a chance of winning. Raven spoke up: "There is no use of your playing like that. I thought it was going to be a fair game, we know what you have come for. Take him into the house. We will give him something to eat."

They went into Woodpecker's house and sat down. Wren asked of Raven, "What am I going to give him to eat." He advised, "Whatever you can give him. You are always picking salmon berries. Give him some of them." She answered, "But this is winter." He said "that does not matter. Get some anyhow."

She sent out for four branches of the salmon berry bush, and got ready four big dishes. The branches were brought, and she stuck one up at each of the dishes, and started to whistle. The first time buds appeared on them; the next time they were in blossoms; the third time they were loaded with green berries. The fourth time she whistled they were ripe. She shook the berries from each branch into the dish, filling all of them.

Thunderbird thought she was such a wonderful women that he did not wait to eat the berries, but picked her up and carried her away. They felt very sorry for her, both because she was very likeable, and because she was able to get salmon berries whenever she wanted them. All felt bad about what had happened.

About a day later one man said to Raven, "What is the matter with you? You seem to be losing what little senses you had. You ought to see if we cannot get her back again. We ought to try. This Thunderbird lives on salmon,, We can borrow Salmon's dress, and in that way try to recover her."

Raven agreed, "That sounds all right. I think we could do that." Raven went to Salmon, and borrowed dresses of each kind of salmon. They were packed in a small box. Just before he reached his village, Raven became curious and opened the box to look at the contents, and all the salmon dresses jumped out. The people saw what was happening, and came quickly and helped him get them into the box again. When the young men had disguised themselves as salmon, they started out.

Woodpecker was dressed as silver salmon, Thunderbird had his trap set, and all the salmon entered it. The father of Thunderbird said, "I think you had better get up. Your trap must be full."

Thunderbird went out, taking Wren with him. She sat in the bow and he in the stern. He started picking up the salmon.

Woodpecker, as a silver salmon, jumped around and came as near to Wren as he could. She threw him back a number of times, and when she took hold of him once more to threw him away, he pinched her.

She thought something was wrong, and asked, "Who are you?" He answered, "I'm not Salmon. All our people are here. When Thunderbird roasts us, leave me out. Of our other friends, take care that you pick up every little bit, and put it all in a heap. Do not let one bone escape you. When you have it all together, throw it into the water. Throw it out as far as you can, and all will come to life."

She threw Silver Salmon up on a box. Thunderbird asked why she did this, and she said she wanted to eat it fresh. Some visitors came, and some of the salmon were eaten. Wren picked everything clean, and put it on a mat. In the evening she took this out, went on into the water as far as she could.

Thunderbird's mother warned, "Do not go out too far," but Wren paid no attention. She threw the bones as far as she could, al all the salmon came to life, even those left in the house, who now came jumping down to the water. They had brought an extra dress for Wren. She put this on, and went with them. After reaching home, all the dresses were there.

## Raven and the Fish People

**B**eside Wren, Woodpecker had many wives. He was very handsome, and this was known all over the world. The Princess of Fishes heard of him and that he had so many wives. She wanted to marry him too, but Woodpecker did not like the idea. When she heard of this, she called all the Fish People together, to make war on Raven's tribe.

Raven did not know what do. He said, "The one who can fly highest is Eagle. He will have to be the sentinel." Eagle said, I am quite willing to watch, but you all know how short-sighted I am."

"That is nothing. We will borrow Snail's eyes," said Raven, and young man was sent to do this. Snail said, "I do not want to lend him my eyes. What am I going to see with? And he might keep them."

This was reported to Raven, who said, "What nonsense! We are not going to keep them long, of what good will her eyes be to her when she is killed by the fishes? We want to use them for a good purpose." This word was taken to Snail, who, however, still refused to part with her eyes.

Then Raven heard of this he went to her, pulled her eyes out, and gave them to Eagle. (Eagle liked the eyes so well that he kept them, so snails have no eyes.) He sat up in a high tree, watching. Soon he called down "There comes a canoe!". Soon many more appeared.

The fish people were singing of how they were going to send all the present wives of Woodpecker and that their princess was going to be his wife. The Halibut were to land first, in order to make the beach slippery. As they went ashore, Raven's people speared them. The rest of the fish followed, but all were killed.

This was the first time fish other than the salmon were eaten. Whale was also with the fish people.

## Raven, Sea-eggs and Bat

Raven took his friend Sea-eggs with him to visit Bat. He said, “I want to go and get some sleep from him.” When they came to her house, Bat welcomed them and asked what they wanted. They said, “We have come to get some sleep. She told them “Go to that thick blanket there and lie down.” They did so, and fell asleep immediately.

Then the Bat family lifted the board with the bed. The tide carried them far out on the ocean, and when they awoke they could not see land. Raven was awake first, and called to his companion, “Wake up!. What have we done? We are all wet.” The waves were washing over them.

Sea-eggs was now awake, and the two sat on their board. They could do nothing, as they had no paddles. Raven said, “We will have to do something.” The other suggested, “Let us to be like whales.” He got into the water, but his plan would not work.

Raven said, “Let us try to be sealions.” That also was found to be impossible, as were also a number of other fish they suggested.

At length Raven said, “I am going to turn into a Raven.” He did so and flew home. Sea-eggs thought, “How I might as well turn into a Sea-egg.” He did so, and rolled home through the water. Since that time Ravens and Crows have been the first to wake up in the morning.

Curtis, E. (1915). Research for “The North American Indian”, volume 10.

Stories told by Lagius of the Dzawada’enuxw born in 1845.

Translated by Jane Cook

## Another from Lynai: Stories told by *Lagius* of the *Dzawada'enuxw*, born in 1845

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### Sea Lion and Mink

**S**ea Lion lived far out in the ocean. Mink went to the house of Sea lion and ask him to lend him his bladder. He had a number of them and gave Mink the largest.

The only person at that time who owned fresh water was an old woman Gee-Geese-mun-ka, who lived on Hope Island [*Naweeetee*], which is flat and has many springs. Mink heard of this, and after borrowing the bladder, started out to see this woman. When he neared the island he thought, "How am I going to get that water from there. The only way will be to get her to pay me for something." He thought of doing something about which they would pay him to keep quiet. A tribe of people lived on the island. He went to an old woman there, and asked her advice. She said, "The only thing you can do is to try to get the best of Gee-Geese-Mun-Ka in some way." She promised to help him. He has asked some one for water before he saw this old woman, but it was denied him. The old woman continued, "You might just as well have some of it. It will not do any harm to drink some of it. Only do not drink too much; you might take it all. Water is scarce here too." He began drinking, and the old woman said, "You have had enough now. That will do." He opened his mouth, showing her that it was still quite dry, and said, "I have not

started yet." He started again, and before he was interrupted he had drank all the water from the spring.

He now returned to the Sound, and, going to every large mountain he could find, vomited some of the water, saying every time, "This is to be a river." In this way the rivers of the country were made.

Then he was through with the bladder he took it back to Sea lion. The latter had told him, "You had better bring it back when you are through, for if you do not you will have a very large stomach. That is why I do not wear it when I am at home, but hang it on the wall."

## **Mink and the Fishes**

At one time Mink decided he wanted the queen of the fishes. He could not marry her; he was going to fight her people. So he started out on the ocean, looking for her home. He travelled westward. He finally came to where she lived, a large camp back from a beach. He landed, and went to the first house. People came out, and called him in. He followed them, and in one part of the house saw some young people. These had not noticed him, but were laughing and joking among themselves. He noticed two kinds of people. Some were laughing, and those he called the laughing fish. Others were scratching all the time. He knew later that the former were the dog salmon, and the latter humpbacks.

Mink was asked to sit down. Some water was heated with stones. Someone said to four boys "You boys go and bathe yourselves." They obeyed, and when they returned the people took them and threw them into the boiling water. They were silver salmon. After being put into the kettle they looked just like salmon, having changed from human form. Soon a dish of salmon was set before him, and he began to eat. He found a very sharp bone, the collar bone. He put it under his blanket, so as to take it away with him. The other bones were picked up carefully by the people when he was through eating, and together with what he had left, were

thrown again into the water. At once three boys came to life, and entered the house, but the fourth was deformed, having a gash in his breast, where the stolen bone should have been,. The people gathered the dirt on the floor and threw it in also, but it did no good. They continued looking for the missing part. Mink thought, "I guess I made a mistake. I will have to give up this bone." He said, "I believe I have a bone in my throat." He began to cough. "It is a bone all right." He made believe he was taking it from his throat. He handed it to one of the attendants, who threw it into the water.

Mink was at a loss as to how to proceed. He had thought that by getting the bone he would be successful, but now he was puzzled. He decided to go home again, and think up some other way. He at least knew where they lived. At night he took off his cape, rolled it up, and placed it in a corner. He would pretend he had forgotten it, and possibly some one would bring it down to his canoe when he was about to leave.

In the morning he went down to his canoe to leave. The people were watching hm. Suddenly he turned and said, "I have forgotten my cape! I left it where I slept. I wish one of you would bring it out to me." One answered, "Yes someone will get it." (Mink's brothers were with him in this adventure). Mink thought, "I wish that youngest woman of the crowd would get it." He repeated this hope to himself, and sure enough she came down with his cape. He said to his brothers, "We are dry on the beach. Let us push further out." She began to wade toward the canoe. He said to her, "Come a little further." She did so, and when she handed him the garment, he seized her and pulled her into the canoe, shouting, "Paddle hard, brothers!" They got away before anyone could interfere, and headed for Cape Scott [*the northern-most point on Vancouver Island*].

Meanwhile the fish people had gotten out their war canoe. The foremost were the sockeye, who come earliest in the year. Next were the silver salmon. The dog salmon were some distance behind, as they could not paddle for laughing. The humpbacks were slow because they were all scratching all the time. The

spring salmon were too large to go very fast. The last of the fish people were the steelheads, who did not know how to guide their canoe. They went first to one side and then to the other.

The sockeye almost touched Mink's canoe. Deer who was in the bow of Mink's canoe, said, "We will keep on until we can see the tops of our mountains. Then we will give the girl back to them." When they got into the sound, and could see all the mountains and the inlets, he said, "I think it is about time we let them have the girl" but he was trying to think of a better plan. Mink said "We will turn around, and let the sockeye have the woman." As they were about to hand the girl over to her people, Deer suddenly jumped into the sockeye canoe, lighting on the gunwale and capsizing it. Mink stood up in his canoe and told each of the fish people where to go "And you are to go back every year to these places, for food for the people along the coast."

They helped Deer out of the water, and went homeward.

Curtis, E. (1915). Research for "The North American Indian, volume 10. Stories told by Lagius of the Dzawada'enuxw born in 1845. Translated by Jane Cook

## **Emily Quiring: Fern Women / Snanjang Jaad**

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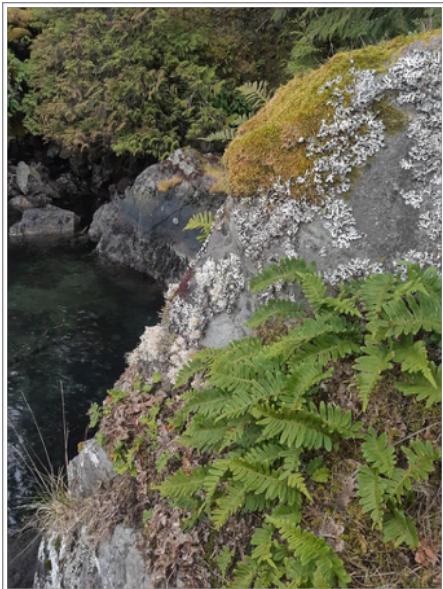
*Copied from the book, Magical Beings of Haida Gwaii by authors Sara Florence Davidson and Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson and illustrated by Alyssa Rossi and Judy Kilgmann.*

*“Fern Women  
is the Magical Being  
of new beginnings.*

*She is delicate in the forest,  
but she is also  
strong enough  
to exist*

*in difficult places.*

*While protecting others,  
she teaches us  
to draw upon  
our own strength,  
which comes from  
the love,  
support,  
and knowledge,  
of family, friends, and  
community.*



Photos by Emily Quiring

*She reminds us  
it is our roots  
that will always  
keep us strong.”*



*“Traditionally, the Haida use ferns for many things: for weaving, for medicines, for steaming food in, and sometimes for eating. But we never take more than we need. The Haida respect all ferns, but the late Elder Mable Williams taught that the ferns that grow from rocks are very special because the rocks make the ferns’ medicine stronger.”*

Davidson, F. S., & Williams-Davidson, T., et al. (2019). *Magical Beings of Haida Gwaii*. Heritage House Publishing.



When doing an interview with knowledge keeper Maria Sampson from Tsartlip and Cowichan, she recalls a friends from Lillooet nation (neighbouring nation to my band Spuzzum) – “Sword fern helps your life to heal”, also can be used as a poultice to heal broken bones and sore ligaments.

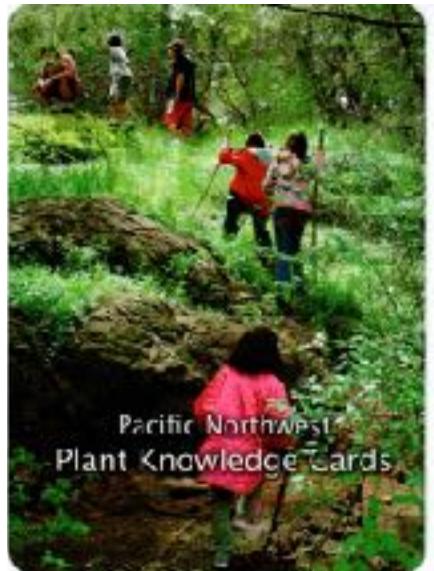
“Pacific Northwest Plant Knowledge cards highlight 65 edible and medicinal plants. The cards describe traditional uses and ways of harvesting each plant and feature Indigenous languages, including Lkwungen, SENĆOŦEN, Hul’q’umi’num, and diiṭiid?atcsx.

Bring Pacific Northwest Coastal Plant Knowledge Cards out on walks to help identify plants, their uses, and keep the old ways strong. Please use these cards as an inspiration to talk to an Elder or Knowledge Keeper.

Royalties from sales of the cards benefit PEPÁKEN HÁUTW Native Plant Nursery for Indigenous restoration projects, including SNIDȻEL (Tod Inlet), a sacred place in traditional WSÁNEĆ territory.

A gentle reminder to non-Indigenous visitors on these lands: please only harvest in our region with permissions from and relationships to our host nations.”

Pacific Northwest Plant Knowledge Cards.” Compost Education Centre, [www.compost.bc.ca/shop/other-products/](http://www.compost.bc.ca/shop/other-products/)



Pacific Northwest Plant Knowledge Cards, (2019) - Indigenous & First Nations Gifts - Strong Nations.” , 2019) - Indigenous & First Nations Gifts - Strong Nations, [www.strongnations.com/store/](http://www.strongnations.com/store/)

An Indigenous view on plants would be teaching the children to have respect for mother nature as she is alive like us.

I like to tell children not to pick plants without reason, instead we can be gentle and observe or pick up ones that have fallen.

If we are allowed to take from the area then it is important to ask first and then give thanks to Mother Nature.

When harvesting medicine you always practice acknowledgement as well as never taking too much.

Only take what you need so the forest can continue to prosper.

## Savanna White: WSÁNEĆ KEO,EL / West Saanich Camas Story

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**V**iolet's mother-in-law told her this story:

There were three girls,-two sisters and their cousin or friend, who were out camping with their families, digging bulbs of KEO,EL [*camas*] That night the girls were lying awake. They were looking up at the stars and talking to each other. One girl said, "I wish I had Bright Eyes up there for my husband." I wish I were married to that Red Eyes," replied another. They soon fell asleep. The next morning, the two sisters woke up. In a different country. It was very strange and beautiful. "Where are we?" They asked each other.

Then, two young men appeared. "Who are you?" the girls asked them.

"We're your husbands" was the answer.

"But we aren't even married!" They said.

"Last night, didn't you wish for stars as your husbands? We are both the ones you wished for. We are star men."

The girls learned that they were up in the sky country. They were told by the star men not to dig too deeply when they went out to dig KEO,EL bulbs. If a bulb broke, they were not supposed to dig down to get it. One girl was curious, and she did dig deep, and they saw a little hole. They had discovered why the star men told them not to dig that deep. Through the hole they saw another

world far down below. They realized that they were looking down at their own world far down below. They became homesick and wanted to return home. They thought about how they could get back to their own land and decided to try to make a rope.

From then on, instead of digging KEO,EL bulbs like they were supposed to, they started gathering SLEWI [*the inner bark of cedar*]. They made it into xe'yexwten [*cedar bark rope*]. They rolled the fibres between their hands and their legs to make string, and then wound the string together to make rope. They did this day after day, until eventually they figured the rope was long enough to reach the earth down below. They lowered it down through the small hole they had made, and when they brought it up, moss was on the end of the rope. This was how they knew the rope was long enough and had touched the earth.

One of the girls volunteered to go down first. She lowered down and down. Her sister watched her going further and further; she looked like a little spider on the end of its web. Then the one sister reached the bottom and pulled the rope as a signal to the other. The other sister followed, and they pulled the rope down after them. The rope is still lying in the mountains somewhere. [*Some people say that Knocken Hill off burn side road in Saanich is the site where the rope came down.*] From this day on, the girls never wished for star men with bright eyes or red eyes again. Now all the girls are carefully looked after when they go out and are told not to wish for stars.

There are many different versions of this story.

Turner, N. J., & Hebda, R. J. (2012). *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the WSANEC People*. Royal BC Museum.

## **Jolene: Knowledge Keeper JB Williams: How Spaeth lost his tail**

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**S**paeth and Raven were fishing at the river. Spaeth was an avid and skilled fisherman, impressing Raven. Befriending the trickster, Spaeth caught fish for Raven.

Spaeth was an avid and skilled fisherman, impressing Raven. Befriending the trickster, Spaeth caught fish for Raven.



In that time, Spaeth had a long and fluffy tail.

Becoming bored and hungry, Spaeth waited for opportunity to steal fish from Ravens' long line of fish, that the pair had previously caught.

Over time, Raven becoming aware of the missing fish, cunningly told Spaeth to help him more.

Raven told Spaeth to stick his tail into a hole he made on the frozen river bank and wait patiently; but over time Spaeth questioned this.

Spaeth struggled and tugged, trying to free his stuck tail. Raven laughed at the sight, taunting Spaeth.

“It is the whiskers on your nose that helps you catch fish! Not your tail, silly. That’ll teach you to steal fish from the trickster.”

Angered and embarrassed, Spaeth pulled his tail clean off. That is how Spaeth, and his ancestors became tail-less from then on.

## **Knowledge Keeper JB Williams: How Octopus gained his eight legs**

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**O**ne day, in the village of the WSÁNEĆ Peoples, a man was busying himself with work. He was revered as a hard worker, but tended to be consumed by it.

XÁLS warned this man to slow down, but he did not heed the Creator's warnings.

XÁLS thought to remedy the man, by adding two more appendages, forcing this man to slow down. With two more appendages he often stumbled and became a sight to see, until he learned how to work in his new body.

After some time, the man became adjusted to all six appendages, giving him more ability to work efficiently.

The man became complacent, and began to slip into his old ways of consuming himself in his work. XÁLS, angered by the man's disobedience, added two more appendages.

The man, now stumbling like a child, was teased and made fun of within the community. In anger and shame, the man fled the land of the WSÁNEĆ to the sea.

He became the Octopus we know today.



## Rona Sylvester: CEDAR Tree of Life

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**C**edar, what is cedar? As First Nations people, what do we do with it, what are the uses of cedar for First Nations people? Cedar is a very important plant for, we use not just parts of the tree, we use the whole tree, the bark we use for making a lot of things from long ago our people would use the bark for rope and making baskets. Today cedar bark is harvested for making hats and capes and mats.

The cedar is also used in our culture for ceremonial uses, the branches are used for bathing at the break of dawn, you take a couple of branches off a tree and go for a bath in the water up the mountain and cleanse yourself with it, this helps you cleanse the evil spirits off of your body. Cedar branches are also used in our ceremonial dancing, you carry the live branches in the ceremonies of namings, baptisms, weddings or just to bless someone. You then need to carry dead cedar branches when dancing for a memorial. The live cedar branches represent life and the dead cedar branches represent death.

Cedar is also used in the homes, you boil the cedar on top of the stove to cleanse your home and you can also drink the cedar as a tea to help with sickness.

This is a picture of two cedar trees that were planted from very small trees. My mom received these two small trees in memory of an elder that had passed away and they were giving them away. So these cedar trees are in memory of a lost elder. Cedar



has so many uses, they are used for making canoes, totem poles, paddles and so many other things.

## Lynai Quatell: Stinging Nettles

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**S**tinging Nettle has been used by Indigenous people up and down the coast since time immemorial. Unfortunately, when I was harvesting it with JB, I did not take notes. Two of my Aunt's both have obtained a great amount of plant knowledge. I've decided instead of giving you a formal definition and its uses, I would share the information straight from my two personal sources.

My Aunty Patricia Dawson harvests traditional plants and makes teas, shampoos and salves. This is what she has to say about stinging nettle: "You can make tea out of it; it is good to make you go pee. You can make shampoo out of it, it is good for your hair, it helps to get rid of dandruff, dry scalp and psoriasis. It is good for your face, it helps to get rid of wrinkles, I put it on my face by my eyes at night and it seems to help. After you strip it, you can use it as rope, it's toughest and it was used for fishing. You can also eat it, it's better than spinach. This is a true story. An old lady from Gwasala Nakwadakw had a stroke, she told RG to go get her stinging nettle, she whacked the paralyzed side, it bled, but she got all of her feeling back."

My Aunty June told me "Stinging nettle is harvested in Spring, from the end of March until June. It is found in moist areas, by streams and riverbanks. Pick the new shoots as they are strong in vitamins, they can be used as tonic for arthritis, allergies. It is good for asthma and bronchitis; it is steamed like spinach and is

high in iron. Our ancestors used to whip the arthritic part with the plant as it would numb the pained area. Rope was made from the fully mature stalk and stem for fishing net. The plants were split, and you could make rope and twine. Also, the nettle roots were washed, pounded and juice extracted to make a drink for pregnant women who were overdue.

I do recall JB's guidelines to cut the plant two rungs up from the bottom as you want to ensure the plant grows back next year. There is something so powerful from harvesting traditional plants, while I was harvesting, I could feel our ancestors with us, guiding us.

I look forward to learning more from traditional knowledge keepers like JB and my two Aunt's.



## **Jerry-Lyn: KEXMIN: Wild Celery, Indian Celery, Indian Consumption Plant**

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**T**he plant that I chose to do my discussion on was the KEXMIN plant, which is also known as *Wild Celery*, *Indian Celery*, or the *Indian Consumption plant*. KEXMIN is a perennial plant that is quite often found in low to mid elevations, or in open meadows.

I always grew up harvesting it in our local WSANEC beaches. I learned that the KEXMIN plant is a part of the carrot family, in the way that they grow. The KEXMIN plant starts to flower around mid May and the seeds start to head by July. Growing up we learned that it isn't good to pick the seeds when they are green. We wait until they are a bit dried out, so we usually harvest them in mid to late August.

We were taught that it is best only to harvest the seeds, and not pick the whole plant like some people do. Doing so would not allow the plant to leave behind any seeds to grow back for the next year. As it is a perennial plant, seeds left behind would allow for new plants to grow or old ones to come back again.

In the old days, our people didn't have Western Medicines to help them when they were not feeling well. The KEXMIN plant was used to help aid in sore throats, we would chew on the seeds so that it would release the juices from inside, and it helped soothe sore throats and coughs. Or the seeds could also be steeped in tea to help with colds and sore throats, or to ease your



tummy when feeling off and not well. Some people like to also add honey and lemon to the steeped too. It's all based on personal preference.

The KEXMIN plant can also be burned to help ease headaches, you just need to inhale the burning plant which can be burned on

your stove top in a pan, or in boiling water. In the old days, people would burn it on top of their fireplace (iron stoves) to help fumigate their homes during illnesses or deaths. Some people believed that burning it also helped to keep away negative spirits or energies as well.

I myself have burned it in my own home when I was going through hard times, having bad dreams, or have felt I needed to clear my space of negative energy or bad vibes. We were always taught to just pray in our own way when doing this.

Growing up we were always taught to only take what you need, and leave behind some for those that may still be coming after you to harvest as well. I have always been grateful for the teachings that were shared with me from my grandparents when it comes to harvesting our traditional plants and medicines. When you remember to think of others, it will always come back to you in one way or another, these have always been the ways of our people.

Turner, N. J., & Hebda, R. J. (2014). *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the Wsanec People*. Victoria, BC: Royal BC Museum. pp. 130-131

Sampson, M. Personal communication. (March 31, 2020)

## **Savanna White: Nootka Rose**

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Roses are beloved globally for their enchanting aroma and beautiful blossoms. Wild Nootka Rose is a deciduous shrub indigenous to the WSANEC territory that has been used for medicinal, utilitarian, spiritual, and of course, adorning purposes.

In the springtime the shoots of the Nootka Rose can be peeled then eaten. The roots can be peeled, boiled, then paired with goose berry, cedar roots to make reef nets. The branches broken off and boiled have been used to treat any eye related ailment; from puffy eyes to cataracts. The petals are edible and can be tossed raw on salads or deserts, brewed into teas, dried, or even infused into tinctures or jams. The hips are high in vitamin, high in iron, as well as a myriad of other benefits. The hips can be used in a variety of ways and even eaten raw after the first frost in autumn. The hairy pits should not be eaten and are known to irritate the digestive tract/anus. Although, the pits may be ingested to treat acute cases of worms.

The rose is a spiritual and symbolic plant in many different cultures with different meanings and teachings. Among many cultures there is a common theme of the rose being a symbol of life and a totem of vitality. The symbol often worn for protection. This meaning resonates for me because I know roses have been used to revegetate barren land i.e. contaminated mining sites.

They are very beautiful plant that brings forth an abundance of medicine and strength.

This information has come from *Saanich Ethnobotany: Culturally Important Plants of the WSANEC People* by Nancy J. Turner and Richard J. Hebda.

## **May Sam's Teachings: Traditional medicines of healing with the Nootka Rose**

The following teachings have been recorded from a conversation with our respected elder from Tsartlip located on the WSANEC territories.

“From my mother in law to her daughter [that was May's sister in law] who shared her teachings with my son, son Scott . When Scott was young, he paid attention to his aunt and he does a lot of his learning from other elders how to be aware be safe around people. There's a lot of people who don't like me, they think I'm making a lot of money under the university and Camosun, but its not that way, its reverse, I'm only getting half my pension, and my husband and I can't tell these people who are angry at me. I have this medicine on my doorway. If in the future you come to my house and see these Nootka Rose branches hanging at front door, it's protection for me and my husband because of how some peoples attitude towards us... its tough...really tough but I love what I do, being with you helping you. Being there with you doing the opening prayer/blessings; I like to do that. I love the staff and everyone I meet there. I like to do all that.”

I then chime in to say--“it's beautiful work”.

## Jolene: Teachings

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Jolene spent time sharing the salmon story with the children. The life cycle of salmon is a story of birth, death and re-birth. Here is some of what she shared with us about her activism and her beliefs.

Standing  
In reflection  
Of,  
Seeing Children  
On Shoulders  
Being held up  
Held up by  
The ones they love

Watching  
Watching them learn  
Learn about Salmon  
Salmon struggling upstream  
Upstream to spawn

Wanting  
Waiting to see,

Connection  
Connection to Nature  
The circle of Life.  
Anticipating  
Anticipating Hope

Hope  
Hope for a better life  
Leaving a better future  
In reflection of  
Self,  
Looking at them  
With all their relations  
Remembering  
Remembering  
Joy  
In celebration of success  
Sadness in completion of  
Death

Wanting  
Wanting change  
In reflection of struggle  
Needing strength  
In reflection of hardships

Wanting more  
For their future  
Being  
Being a parent and educator  
Holding them up!  
Honouring the Child!  
Then the past

Holding space for the Ancestors  
In reflection of the present  
Honouring  
Honouring those who  
Whom, hold up our future  
The present,  
Past  
Learned.

Respecting  
Respecting the shoulders  
Whom,  
Bearing the weight  
Now,  
And then  
Thanking those for  
Being resilient then  
And now

Joy  
Follows  
Joy follows us  
As we honour  
Children's spirit  
Now and then  
Lifelong

Knowing  
Knowing that  
We too have time  
If only til then  
The gift of Now

Preparing  
Preparing for  
The best  
We can leave  
Hoping for a better future  
Resilient as  
Will be

Bones  
Back to the Ancestors  
Hope-ing  
Hope-ing  
\*\*\*\*  
PS Death stinks;  
And life goes on

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## **Generations Change the Future we Cultivate Now**

**M**y children have always given me the want for change. If I was not inspired by love to change my reality, and fight upstream against the mainstream, I'd have never have a story to tell.

I have heard it in many ways; we protect what we love! I am inspired to continue to follow children's affinity to nature, whilst inspiring them to stand up for what they love.

Salmon, Bats and Painted Turtles are some of the local creatures that have been a poignant learning schema. Being out in nature has given me the opportunity to reconnect to the animals that call these lands home.

Being a matriarch means I'm the front-woman, taking on the unforgiving environment. I'd opt for taking on a wet coast rainy



day, rather than navigating linear thinking of today's hierarchy and settler systems of oppression.

Enid notes that Jolene's activism enriched all of our class experience. We visited the Martin Sheen and learned of the work they did there.

## About the Authors

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### Lynai Quatell

*Lynai Quatell is Kwakwakawakw from Musgamagw Tsawataneuk and Ligwilhdakw as well as Squamish. She is a mother to a ten year old son, and is humbled to be sharing her Kwakwakawakw stories with you on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples. Gilakasla (Thank You)*

### Emily Quiring

*I grew up in Prince George. My Mom came to Canada from England at 19 and ended up meeting my Dad and got married. My Dad originates from Spuzzum, Nlaka'pamux Nation in BC, he was adopted into the Quiring Family as a baby. I have two younger brothers and am an Aunty. I moved to the lower mainland at 19 and have now found home here on the Island, acknowledging that I am a guest on the unceded traditional territories of the WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen peoples of the Coast Salish Nation.*

### Rona Sylvester

*Rona is from the Tsawout First Nation, and offers these stories that were shared with her sister Samantha by John Elliott, for her final thesis paper.*

### Jerry-Lyn Sampson

*I am from Tsartlip First Nation which is a part of the WSANEC territory, in beautiful Brentwood Bay, BC. I am a student in the Indigenous Early Learning and Care program at Camosun College, and together we have gathered stories that we thought would be*

*great to share with everyone. I think that is very important to share stories that represent who we are and where we come from as WILNEW people. This is why I chose to share the stories that I did as they both come from the WSANEC territory, so they are a big part of my own people's history, and a part of who I am and where I come from. I hope that you enjoy them.*

## **Jolene Tory**

*"Jolene"; named after Dolly Parton's song. Lover of Nature. Protector of Mother Earth. Family of Earth Warriors. Passionate for the Oceans. One who will always clean the beaches, in reflection of combing Mother of the Sea's hair free of marine debris.*

## **Savanna Maya Star White**

*Savanna was born on the traditional occupied land of the WSANEC, Stz'uminus, and Cowichan peoples, today known as Saltspring Island British Columbia. She was raised on the occupied traditional lands of the Ktunaxa, Sinixt, and Sylis peoples in the Kootenays. Her ancestors on her mother's side are Jamaican and Cree; on her father's side, they are English and Ukrainian. She is currently studying Indigenous Early Learning and Care through Camosun College. Our cohort is located off-campus in the beautiful WSANEC territory in Tsartlip. I am honoured to have the opportunity to learn alongside all my relations. There is something very important about being able to listen and share the stories of the land. Even when we are visitors in a place the land and ancestors are caring for, they are giving us knowledge and medicine. Thank You.*

## **Enid Elliot**

*Enid Elliot has had the privilege of learning/teaching with this Indigenous ELC cohort from Camosun College for over a year and a half. She is a grateful Settler who has lived on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen peoples for over forty years now. She has also been an early childhood educator for over forty years and is continually delighted by children and their families.*







Pencil crayon drawing by Emily Quiring