Why Animals and Man Can No Longer Talk to One Another

The Indian Reading Series
THE INDIAN READING SERIES: Stories and Legends of the Northwest is a collection of authentic material cooperatively developed by Indian people from twelve reservations. Development activities are guided by a Policy Board which represents the Indian community of the Pacific Northwest. The Pacific Northwest Indian Reading and Language Development Program Policy Board members are:

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Why Animals and Man Can No Longer Talk to One Another
Level II Book 20

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A long time ago the animals and man could talk to one another.
This story tells why this is no longer true today.
Many winters ago, the animals and the Indian people could talk to each other.
They worked and played together in peace and happiness.
They sat together at council fires.
The animals taught the Indian people many useful lessons.
Otter showed the Indian people how to catch fish called Pike.
Beaver told them how to build homes that would keep them warm and dry.
From Bear and Wolf, the Indian people learned how to follow the forest trails.
Panther showed the people where to hide.
Horse taught them how to run swiftly.
Fox taught them how to enjoy life and be able to laugh at themselves.
After the Indian people learned all the ways of the animals, the animals became very frightened.
They were afraid that the Indian people would no longer need their help and would try to make slaves of the animals.
One harvest moon when all the Indian people were sleeping, the animals broke the rules of friendship. Secretly they called a great council fire.
Jealous Wolf spoke first.
"The Indian people are our enemies," he growled.
"Let us rush into the village and kill them!"
Panther wanted to kill the Indian people, too.
But Bear had another idea.
He wanted to challenge the Indian people to an open war.
"No," said Beaver.

"We could wait until the winter moon comes and then tear down their houses at night. Then they will freeze."
Old Fox said slyly, "Let us pretend to be friends and secretly rob their corn fields at night while they sleep."
"Men and animals have always been brothers," said Horse.
"We must not hurt them now.
Why not invite them berry picking and lead them so far away that they will get lost and never come back."
Then Dog spoke up bravely.
"Man has always helped us.
If war comes, I will go with man."
The animals argued and talked louder and louder.
They talked so loudly that their voices
   reached the ears of the Great Spirit.
The heart of the Great Spirit was very sad.
The Great Spirit spoke to the animals.  
"You have broken the friendship of the council fires.  
As a punishment, you can never again speak with man  
as you would a brother.  
Because of his heartless plan, Beaver will be hunted  
for his fur to keep man warm.  
Traps and snares will be set for Fox and Wolf.  
Panther will be an enemy and will be killed  
by the Indian people."
The Great Spirit said, “Horse remembered old friendships
so he will still be able to understand man,
but he will not be able to talk with him.
Dog has also broken the law of the council fire,
but because of his friendship to man,
he will always be welcome in the homes of man
and will guard man’s children.”

And this is why, say the Indian people,
that animals cannot talk today.
But Horse and Dog can understand every word man says,
even though they cannot answer.
VERBENA GREENE

Verbena Greene, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon, is the mother of eight children. She attended Warm Springs Boarding School until the 11th grade and later earned her G.E.D. She has served as Local Coordinator for the Warm Springs Curriculum Development Committee and was the Tribal Education Program Liaison for more than seven years. She presently is serving as Culture Resource Person for the Tribes, providing classroom cultural instruction (legends, values, songs, etc.) on a consultant basis to schools and community colleges. She enjoys working with young people and is pleased that students are now forming culture clubs and holding powwows in the school environment.

CAROL ALLISON

Carol Allison has been closely associated with the Warm Springs Tribes for 16 years. She works in several different media, including water colors, cloth painting (shawls, skirts) and cartooning. In addition to writing and illustrating children's books, she has worked with Warm Springs committees writing down tribal history and culture.
Booklets available in the Level II sequence are listed below. Numbers refer to the planned sequence of use in the Teacher’s Manual. Materials developed by these tribes and others in the Northwest are included in the Levels I and III sequences.

1 End of Summer
   Crow Tribal Historical and Cultural Commission

2 Thunder and the Mosquito
   Muckleshoot Tribe

3 Why the Codfish Has a Red Face
   Skokomish Tribe

4 How Wildcat and Coyote Tricked Each Other
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5 Pat Learns About Wild Peppermint
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6 Picture Writing
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8 The Bob-Tailed Coyote
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9 The Great Flood
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10 The Rainbow
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11 The Time the Whale Came to Jackson’s Bay
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12 Coyote and the Man Who Sits On Top
    Salish Cultural Committee of The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation

13 The Crow
    Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation

14 Tepee, Sun and Time
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15 Water Story
    Crow Tribal Historical and Cultural Commission

16 How Birds Learned to Fly
    The Fourteen Confederated Tribes from the Yakima Nation

17 Napi and the Bullberries
    Blackfeet Tribe

18 How Cottontail Lost His Tail
    The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

19 Being Indian Is
    The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

20 Why Animals and Man Can No Longer Talk to One Another
    The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

For order information and prices of the above booklets and the Teacher’s Manual, contact the publisher:

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