

Program Name: Native American Legends and Their Importance

Artist: Dianne Moran

Special Requirements:

Large cleared space; long table for display items

Special Points of Interest:

Stories were not written down, but were learned by apprentices who wished to teach and carry on tribal history. New storytellers were chosen by old ones; it was considered a great honor to be so chosen.

Performance Description

It has been said that as long as people have been upon the earth, there have been stories. Stories may be entertaining, designed to make listeners laugh, or may reveal lessons in life—morals we can learn from. Some stories explain the natural world and tell “how things came to be”. Native American legends cover all three areas, but the “came to be” stories are perhaps the best known.

These stories might describe how the chipmunk got his stripes or how the sun came to be in the sky. Even though hundreds of different tribes had their own versions of these stories, they were all remarkably alike, each showing a respect for the natural world and how people are a part of all life. It was the storyteller’s intent to teach lessons in life as well as explain natural phenomena within

their legends. Storytellers were highly respected members of the tribes.

In this program, Dianne will arrive in full deer hide dress, bringing her basket of Native American cultural items. Students are invited to identify objects. Three stories will be shared and two students will hold live animals which appeared in the stories.



Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- understand how Native Americans depended upon animals for their survival
- learn how stories were used to help explain how things came to be and as teaching tools

Standards addressed:

- Knows how a culture’s art works and artifacts reflect its values and beliefs
- Engages in active listening

Artist Bio: Dianne Moran



Dianne Moran is an award-winning storyteller who has worked with audiences for 35 years as a folklorist/naturalist. She lives in the Missouri Ozarks where she owns *Earth Ways Farm*, an environmental camp. Her programs may include Mt. Dulcimer and relics, as well as her live animals which serve as metaphors for her stories.

Dianne performs *Chautauqua* programs as a Civil War and Lewis & Clark scholar throughout the Midwest. She has produced

numerous CDs, tapes and videos of her living histories. Her programs receive funding from the Missouri Arts Council, Missouri Humanities Council, and received the *Program Award for Artistic Excellence and Educational Effectiveness* from Young Audiences of St. Louis. Dianne has performed for hundreds of school programs, workshops, and residencies, making her a curriculum regular for thousands of school children in Missouri and throughout the midwest.

List of Resources:

Books:

Bruchac, Joseph and Michael J. Caduto. *Keepers of Life: Discovering Plants Through Native American Stories and Earth Activities for Children*; Fulcrum Publishing, 1997. ISBN: 1555913873

Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz. *American Indian Myths and Legends*; Pantheon, 1985. ISBN: 0394740181

Curtis, Natalie. *The Indians' Book*; Gramercy, 1994. ISBN: 0517615398

Audio Tapes:

Wind Whispers; Journeys Into The Past-Sacagawea; Earth Woman Tales; At My Grandfather's Knee by Dianne Moran

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022
KCya.org

Vocabulary

Ah-ho: Cherokee greeting of hello or goodbye

Brain Tanning: ancient method of preserving animal skins with a mixture of water and brains of an animal

Buffalo Paunch: a buffalo's stomach; used as a cooking kettle

Di-ne-ho: spoken words to signify the end of a story

Dish Gosh: a plains Indian greeting of hello or goodbye

Flint Knapping: the method of using flint rock, a deer antler tip, and a piece of animal skin to create, by pressure flaking, an arrow head or spear point

Parfleche: a rawhide animal skin made into a bag or "suitcase"

Post-Performance Activities

1. Have students make up their own legends.
2. Tell or read other Native American stories to students and discuss the messages and morals that each story has to tell.
3. Visit a local museum that exhibits Native American relics, such as the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.
4. Visit a Native American pow wow.

