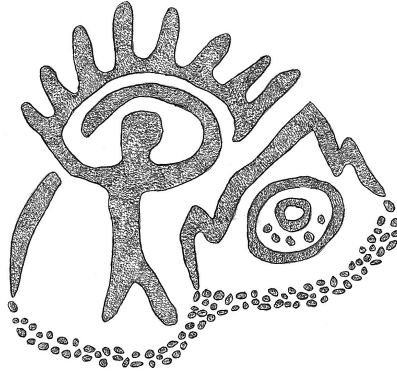


Educational Tools for Teachers & Parents



Go Gather Seeds and Eat Them • A Story by Thomas Doty

Key Cultural Concepts

Go Gather Seeds and Eat Them is set in Ashland, Oregon and in the nearby Siskiyou Mountains. Though this territory is seasonally shared between the Takelmas and Shastas, this story focuses on Takelma culture.

A Balanced Homeland for All People — In Takelma world view, Rock People are as important as Human People or Tree People or Animal People. Balance is maintained by People participating rather than intruding, conserving rather than taking too much, by sharing rather than hoarding. But sometimes things go wrong. In the Panther and the Deer story, Panther and Wildcat get greedy and wasteful in their hunting and tip the balance. The story reminds the Takelmas to take only what they need so all of the People in their homeland live well. “Through the rest of the winter, Panther and Wildcat hunted together. They killed only what they needed and wasted no meat. They had plenty of food, but never too much.” (Page 11).

Rich Stories and Good Food — In Takelma culture, there is an ancient connection between stories and food. Both keep the People healthy. At the end of a storytelling, the teller says, “Gweldi. Baybit’ lep’lap. Finished! Go gather seeds and eat them.” Winter storytelling and seasonal food gathering are integral parts of the annual life cycle, and has been for thousands of years. In the story the woodcarver tells, the woman’s food basket is half–full to leave room for her story. And later, a young girl places the woodcarver’s carving — a symbol of his story — into a shopping bag. “Her mother explained it to her when she was a child. ‘After being fed the lessons of the stories, it’s time to eat food. Each is a kind of nourishment, and we need both to live.’” (Page 7).

At the Village of the Digging Stick Women — Traditional Takelma culture is matriarchal. The women are in charge! While both men and women pass cultural teachings to their sons and daughters, wisdom and knowledge of stories and food is passed mostly through generations of women. As Doty and Coyote travel into the mountains with the young man and woman, it is the woman who knows the way. It is the woman who finds the home of the Digging Stick Women where she meets Gwisgwashan, the Keeper of Stories, and Acorn Woman, one of several medicine women associated with food. “In this hidden place, the Digging Stick Women protect an ancient wisdom. The way here is a journey toward a knowledge of abundance.” (Page 7).

A Good Place to Live — The story begins and ends at the Food Co–op in Ashland, Oregon. Not unlike the Takelma village that once stood there, the Co–op is a social hub, brimming with friends and food and stories. There are paths that lead to houses, and others that follow old Indian trails into the Siskiyou Mountains, and there are several sources of sweet water. A good place to live is exactly that, no matter the century or the culture. Each Takelma village had at least one storyteller — sometimes several — and the Co–op is no different. “I gaze toward the old village site and try out the first words of a new story. ‘People have always lived here....’” (Page 11).

Writing Prompts & Discussion Questions

These prompts and questions address important ideas in *Go Gather Seeds and Eat Them*.

1. What does the title mean? To you? To the Takelmas?
2. During the storm, the men try to go hunting, but the storm blows them back into the cave. It is the woman who finds a way to get food. How does she know what to do? What would you have done?
3. Describe the Village of the Digging Stick Women. Why is this place important to the Takelmas?
4. Is it significant that the girl places the wood carving in a shopping bag? Why or why not?
5. If you were to tell a story that teaches people not to be wasteful, what would that story be?