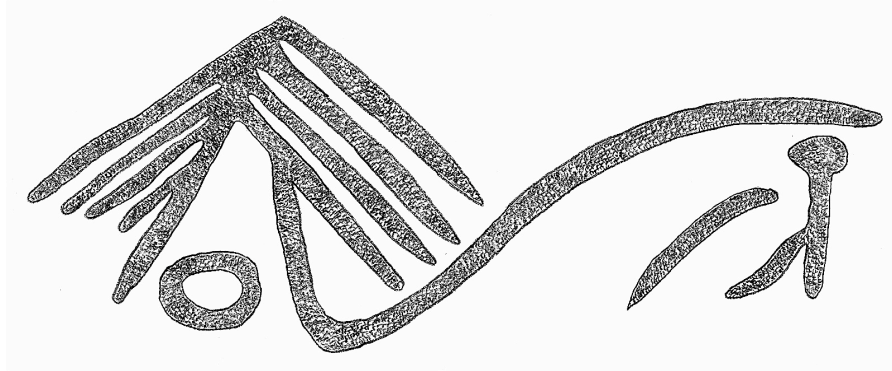
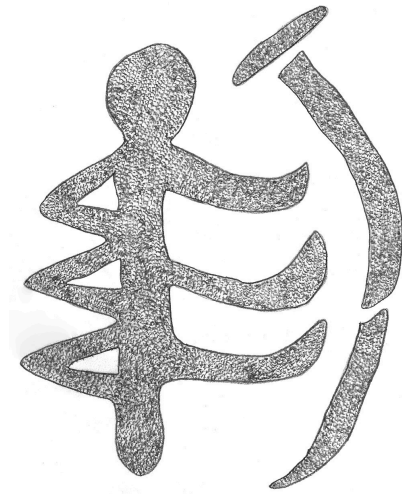


# At Camas Woman's Home

Thomas Doty



She is a braid of fog along a creek, swirling and twisting. In an alpine meadow, she is a wisp of morning mist. At night she is a spiral of smoke from a storytelling fire. She dances in firelight and shadows, shapeshifting into an old woman who lives inside an ancient myth. Where women gather, she weaves her voice into their centuries of wisdom. She is an ever-present protector of the Plant People who chant her name. She is Camas Woman!



The ancient knowledge of plants — where to find them, how to prepare them for food, how to turn them into healing herbs to keep the people healthy — has been passed from generation to generation by the medicine women. The wisest of these women became myth characters. Their traditional mountain homes circle the southern Oregon homeland of the Takelmas. The women keep watch over the Human People and all of their relations ... Rock People, Salmon People, Tree People, Animal People, Bird People, and their good friends, the Plant People.

Rock Old Woman lives on Sexton Mountain, Acorn Woman on Mount McLoughlin, and Digging Stick Woman in the Siskiyou. Their stories are kept alive by Gwisgwashan, a wandering Takelma teller of tales and keeper of sacred stories.

Each year, during the summer-to-fall moons called Berries in the Mountains and Acorns in the Valleys, the medicine women journey to a meadow that is the Old Time home of Camas Woman. Here they share old stories and new stories in the high-country cradle of the Cascade Mountains. Then in the winter, all through the valleys, Gwisgwashan spreads the stories among the people ... like good food, like good medicine ... stories that keep them connected with the old ways as they negotiate ever-evolving paths through ancient landscapes.