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**Authors**

Thompson, Nile Robert  
Sloat, C. Dale

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# The Use of Oral Literature to Provide Community Health Education on the Southern Northwest Coast

**NILE ROBERT THOMPSON AND C. DALE SLOAT**

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Among the American Indians of western Washington State and northwest Oregon stories have served as educational tools by presenting lessons concerning the traditional culture. Several types of instruction have been noted in the oral literature of these Indians of the Southern Northwest Coast. June Collins, for example, describes several rules of ethics (caring for the aged and handicapped, limiting potential marriage partners after the death of a spouse, and treating step-children humanely) in stories of the Skagit Indians.<sup>1</sup> William Shelton (1868–1938), a Snohomish Indian, affirms that such stories impart principled messages to the audience: “My parents, uncles, and great-uncles told me, in days gone by, stories which would create in me the desire to become brave, and good, and strong, to become a good speaker, a good leader; they taught me to honor old people and always do all in my power to help them.”<sup>2</sup> There is, however, another set of messages beyond ethics, good citizenship, and bravery. A subset of the oral literature, either whole stories or parts of them, provides its audience with information about human health concerns. These stories attempt to teach listeners how to prevent certain illnesses, avoid bodily harm, and relieve minor afflictions.<sup>3</sup> They also deal with mental health issues, sexual instruction, spirit-power contact, and coping with old age.

Today these stories present another type of insight. They allow us access into the cosmology of the Southern Northwest Coast populations and provide us with a look into their methods for analyzing nature. Through these stories we are able to judge the validity of claims that the indigenous understanding of contagious disease very often parallels Western concepts of germ theory.<sup>4</sup>

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Nile Robert Thompson is managing partner of Dushuyay Research, a Seattle-based consulting firm, and a part-time instructor of anthropology at North Seattle Community College. He has studied Coast Salish language and culture for the past thirty-three years. C. Dale Sloat was professor of English and linguistics at the University of Oregon for fifteen years and spent twenty-three years in the private sector. He began his studies of Salish language and culture in 1963.

In this treatment of oral literature we will examine its use in health education. The sample stories discussed here were used to give basic health training to the general population. The stories included address only a portion of the wide range of illnesses. As an article in a previous issue of this journal pointed out, "Illness theories were complex; some were based on a logic of supernatural causes requiring supernatural curative techniques; others were based on naturalistic and herbal knowledge."<sup>5</sup> The kind of training conveyed by the stories discussed here belongs to the latter type. It is direct and practical, and quite different from the medical training given to at least four types of specialist practitioners.<sup>6</sup>

### SOUTHERN NORTHWEST COAST CULTURES

The Northwest Coast is a cultural region that stretches from northern California to southern Alaska, between the Pacific Coast and the Cascade Range/Coastal Mountains. For the purposes of this article we define the Southern Northwest Coast as the subarea situated roughly between the Washington–British Columbia border and the Oregon–California border, possibly the same area as the "Oregon–Washington region" discussed by Melville Jacobs.<sup>7</sup>

The most northern of the peoples discussed here comprise five neighboring populations, each of which speaks its own Coast Salishan language. In the north, along the Nooksack River, in what is today Whatcom County in western Washington State, are the Nooksack people. To the south of them are the Puget Sound Salish, who lived along and inland from the shores of Puget Sound. Of the numerous Puget Sound Salish tribes, we bring into the discussion the Upper Skagit, Swinomish (or Lower Skagit), Snohomish, Suquamish, and Snoqualmie. To the west are the Twana people, who resided in the Hood Canal basin. North of the Twana, along the Straits of Juan de Fuca, are the Klallam. To the south of the Puget Sound Salish are the Upper Chehalis people, who lived along the Chehalis River above today's town of Satsop. The unrelated Quileute, whose language is of the Chemakuan family, are on the Pacific Coast to the west, centered at La Push.<sup>8</sup>

We also give examples from two related pairs of groups from Oregon. Some linguists classify the Chinookan and Coos language families as distantly related members of the Penutian family. The Clackamas Chinook lived in the Clackamas River drainage, along the Willamette River below today's Oregon City, and upstream along the south side of the Columbia River to today's Troutdale. Closer to the mouth of the Columbia River were the Kathlamet Chinook. The Hanis and Miluk Coos lived near the Coos River and Coos Bay on the Oregon Coast.<sup>9</sup>

### STORYTELLING SETTING

Storytelling was typically a winter activity, performed during the season when extended families resided together in communal dwellings. It was one of a fixed set of tasks undertaken during this sedentary time of the year. Among

the Suquamish, for example, the “winter season was a time when elders instructed the young and traditions were passed on through song, dance, and storytelling. Activities such as carving, weaving, basket making, and net making and repair also took place during these months, as the community prepared for the coming fishing and gathering season.”<sup>10</sup> The storytelling season, the usual storytellers, and even the time of day when stories would be told were similar throughout the region.

The general storytelling situation is exemplified by the Upper Skagit case: “Skagits told stories in the [late] autumn and winter, and [then] at night from the full of darkness until the late evening supper before retiring. . . . It was generally the older men and women of the household who were the storytellers. And older women, that is, over forty or so, particularly are renowned as having been household recitalists.”<sup>11</sup> The storytelling season and hour were much the same among the Upper Chehalis: “Stories [are] told in the winter. Storytellers [s]tart after supper, and may tell until after midnight. [The audience is n]ot confined to children of [the teller’s] own family—any child who like[s] may come.”<sup>12</sup>

Some groups, like the Upper Chehalis, had members who were professional storytellers. These professionals would search out good stories among neighboring tribes, bring them back, and customize them for their own purposes: There “[a]re some ‘professional’ story tellers. That’s his business to tell stories—his boys who are taking lessons [i.e., students] will take good care of the old fellow—[He] will be respected. Would go a long ways to get another story—from a different country. Would tell it with his story and make it good.”<sup>13</sup>

Storytelling was part of the enculturation process for Twana children and others of the region. The community had as an objective “inculcating socially valued attitudes and behavior traits,” providing the children with a “set of values and goals accepted by everyone in the free section of society.”<sup>14</sup> “Twana myths . . . were not moralistic and did not stress conduct standards in any very obvious way. Some of them recounted incidents which our culture would class as obscene or savage, and contained characters whom the Twana themselves regarded as disreputable. All were told to children, and listening to them was considered part of the educative process.”<sup>15</sup> The Twana were not alone in telling stories of what some might consider questionable taste. The type of stories we discuss here, “regardless of what a Western reader might think, were good healthy fare for Skagit men, women and children alike.”<sup>16</sup>

### CLASSIFICATION OF TALE PERIODS

Elizabeth Jacobs and Jarold Ramsey propose three categories: the Myth Age, the Transformation, and the Historical Period.<sup>17</sup> Collins and Sally Snyder have but two, with the Transformation coming at the end of the Myth Age.<sup>18</sup> We will divide our discussion into three parts and comment later as to the implications of our findings on this contrast in analyses. Independently of the number of basic periods, a tale is classified based on the type of characters and the activities portrayed.

*The Myth Age.* Tales referring to an earlier period, before the world was changed to what it is now, are set in the Myth Age. During this time the “topography was entirely different”; there were no mountains, and rivers ran in courses different from their present ones.<sup>19</sup> The world is populated by an early people, anthropomorphized elements, “monsters, freaks, and [other] confusions of nature.”<sup>20</sup>

*The Transformation.* “The Myth Age flows into the Age of Transformation, when [a] transformer went about ordering the world (not necessarily ‘perfecting’ . . .), turning the [earliest] people into animals . . . and certain beings into natural landmarks.”<sup>21</sup> The transformer changed the early people into today’s animals and spirits, both of whom have the ability to serve as powers for the humans who would come. This “sudden world change marking the end of the myth era” was referred to by the Twana people as “the capsizing.”<sup>22</sup> According to Andrew Joe, a Swinomish, “The end of the Flood and the creation of the ‘tribes’ seems to mark the beginning of human existence as it is today [, with] the necessity of humans to contact the spiritual world through dreams [following] the withdrawal of deities from the world, or their transformation to ordinary animals or features of the landscape.”<sup>23</sup> Melville Jacobs notes that the number of works of any kind set in this period, which he calls the “Transformational Times,” is relatively small.<sup>24</sup>

*The Historical Period.* Animal characters are rare and are not anthropomorphized in the Historical Period. Human institutions are discussed, and tribal groups may be named.<sup>25</sup> “The third age is ‘historical’ only in the sense that its events are not cataclysmic or precedent-setting; transformations still occur but not as a matter of course; the world, with its human and animal inhabitants, has settled down and pretty much taken on its present reality.”<sup>26</sup> As reported by Andrew Joe: “[Now] miraculous workings are lost to earthly creatures except as they are meagerly manifested through persons who have attained ‘[spirit] power’ through dreaming.”<sup>27</sup>

The very name “Historic Period” implies a connection to the present. Snyder attempts to ascertain just how long ago the period is thought to have begun:

When did the Historical Era begin? This is not a rhetorical question. Skagits provided an answer through genealogical records which carry back seven or eight generations to tribal founders named in tales of the “Change” and the early historical present. Genealogies of the upper-class end with an ancestral legendary figure. . . . There is noticeable compacting and distortion of lineage as it becomes more remote. And for purposes of social status people recalled only favored distant ancestral names. At any rate, we may say that the beginning of the Historical Era was no more than eight generations before the immediate present. . . . [F]or any Skagit, whether alive today or two-hundred years ago, the beginning of the historical present is only several generations ago.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the concept of how far back the Historic Period starts differs from tribe to tribe. One Twana Indian told Eells circa the 1880s that *dukWibahL*, the transformer, sent the great flood or deluge “to wash the earth about a hundred years ago.”<sup>29</sup>

In terms of verifiable time the Indians in the northern portion of the area under consideration here could not have moved in until after the end of the last ice age, about ten thousand years ago. The great flood caused by the melting glaciers at the end of that age may itself have been the natural occurrence that equates to the period of transformations that the myths discuss. That is, it was the time when the world was in a flux and becoming shaped for the Indians who would come later. Indeed, the Tillamook view the Transformation Period as being “when South Wind made the world over as it is known today.”<sup>30</sup>

## SAMPLE TALES WITH HEALTH MESSAGES

### Period 1: The Myth Age

Tales with various messages are set in the Myth Age.<sup>31</sup> The Twana have a genre of nursery tales.<sup>32</sup> These short stories, intended for a very young audience, are of a limited length: eleven to sixteen words. Even so, the two examples presented here are extraordinarily rich, both in the use of literary devices and in suggestions about the cosmological implications of the messages conveyed.<sup>33</sup> “[T]he stories are, on one level, thoroughly *didactic*: they are designed to convey social and moral instruction as well as delight—indeed, the two purposes, generally at odds in our literature, strike a remarkable imaginative balance in them.”<sup>34</sup>

The story of Boil, when translated into English, contains only four sentences, that of Louse only three:

#### BOIL

1. Boil was getting bigger.
2. Her husband told her to bathe.
3. She got into the water.
4. She disappeared.

#### LOUSE

1. Louse lives in a big house.
2. Louse sweeps her house.
3. Louse gets mixed into the dirt.

These stories for young children make use of personified comic characters. The characters, however, are quite dissimilar. Lice are living creatures that “are more closely associated with man than any other member of the animal kingdom, because they [can] exist upon his body through all stages of their development.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast, a boil is inanimate; thus, its personification is even more interesting than that of a louse. Although inanimate, a boil is a suitable candidate for personification because it grows and thus can be viewed as having life.

Both Boil (*spus*) and Louse (*b3sCH3d*)<sup>36</sup> engage in self-destructive acts, behavior that is perhaps a universal device of ironic humor. But even though this behavior may be universal, its application in these stories is culture specific; that is, the stories are humorous in a culturally meaningful way. The humor of the stories is also sugarcoating. According to Snyder, “narration of stories was also educational, entertaining and explanatory. But the fact that narration concentrated on problems must mean that the act of stating them, sometimes laughing at them, and turning them into highly interesting fictions, had still another function [:] to make life more pleasant.”<sup>37</sup>

The Louse story clearly contains a lesson in prevention: keep the house floor clean and you will keep out head lice.<sup>38</sup> The Boil story can be viewed as having a parallel message: bathe frequently, and you will prevent boils. But the Boil story can also be interpreted as demonstrating a cure: wash the area as the boil begins to grow. (We will present several related stories below that identify lancing as the technique to be used once the boil has come to a head.)

But these stories do more than illustrate a preventive or curative technique. They also afford a look at investigative methodology within Southern Coast Salish cosmology. They demonstrate a principle of *isolation* in which a creature or phenomenon is observed outside of its usual context. In the stories there is no head for Louse to infest just as there is no body for Boil to exist on. It is the abstraction of Louse and Boil from their usual contexts that leads the listener to the means of controlling them. The self-destruction symbolizes the fact that the nature of the ailment itself is the key to its control. Understand that nature, and the control follows.

This presentation of the phenomena implies an abstract, analytical, clinical kind of investigation, where subjects of study are integral, just the opposite of the holism we have usually heard ascribed to American Indians. It also implies an ultimately benign world in which causes can be found empirically. Such a world can be brought under the dominion of humans by means of cleverness. These ideas about the cosmos imply a belief in technology. Such views about analytic investigation and the resultant technology are consistent with the operative, traditional religion. They also bear a lot of resemblance to European thought on the same subjects. Our reading of these stories is consonant with the view that “myths that detail causes are science in infancy.”<sup>39</sup>

If the above analysis concerning the purpose of the stories of Louse and Boil is correct, we might expect to find similar stories intended for audiences beyond those of nursery age. In fact, we do find adult versions. A Hoodspout Twana woman, Liza Lewis Purdy, narrated a fuller version of the Louse story to Leon Metcalf in 1952. This longer tale is probably the source of the reduced, nursery version.

#### LOUSE

1. Louse was alone.
2. Louse swept the house.
3. He piled the dirt up at the door.
4. He went back into the house and sank down.
5. He is lost now.

6. And they looked.
7. "Where did Louse go?"
8. "Where are you?" they hollered.
9. There was no answer.
10. He was mixed up in the dust on the ground.
11. He never was found.
12. Now he is lost.

Based on the gender of the determiner used with Louse, the character in this story must be viewed as male, even though sweeping was an activity associated with females.<sup>40</sup> In this respect this tale is anomalous. (See our discussion below of the role of elderly women in education among these groups.)

As expected, we also find longer stories dealing with Boil. The following Upper Skagit story contains elements in common with the Twana nursery tales above. However, its message extends into the arena of mental health as well.

#### BOIL-IN-THE-ANUS AND SMALL HAMMER

1. Two old women live together, Boil-in-the-Anus and Small Hammer.
2. Boil was at home but Hammer was out.
3. Boil decided to gather bark for fuel.
4. A fir needle fell right on her head and broke it, so she died.
5. Hammer returned home and began looking for Boil.
6. She found the bark and a rope used to tie it under the tree.
7. Then she saw Boil's hair lying there with all the pus running out.
8. So she realized, "Someone must have burst Boil's head and killed her."
9. Hammer felt really bad and cried.
10. She said, "Now I'll be alone in the house."
11. She walked down to the river to wash her face.
12. All of a sudden she slipped down the rocks, rolled to the bottom of the river and drowned.<sup>41</sup>

Again, Boil-in-the-Anus is personified and the message is somewhat graphic. This time the instruction deals with the cure rather than the prevention. Here the listener is told that a fir needle can be used to lance a boil in this delicate location. Lancing of this kind seems to have been a real treatment; Elmendorf notes that the Twana did lance boils.<sup>42</sup>

Although Snyder doesn't specify that she views this story as providing a treatment, she does view Boil as being "a transient thing—pierce it and it is no longer a boil." Similarly, she considers Small Hammer, actually just a rock of the right shape, to be transient also: "A hammer lying on a rocky bed is only another rock—no longer a useful object." Insightfully, she sees that the death of Hammer "expresses the futility the living [especially the aged] felt upon the death of contemporaries."<sup>43</sup> Thus, the Twana were discussing then what is a new topic today on National Public Radio: the connection between mental well-being and physical health. The elderly person whose longtime partner has died and newly retired senior citizens who have nothing to do share their plight with Small Hammer.



Like the story of Louse, which is found as a nursery tale among the Twana and Puget Sound Salish and as a fuller version among the Hoodspout Twana, the story of Boil being popped by a falling part of a tree exists across cultural boundaries. The following is a portion of a Nooksack story told by Louise George to Norman Lerman:

From SLEDGE HAMMER, WEDGE, AND BOIL

1. Sledge Hammer and Wedge were two brothers and Boil was their sister.
2. Sledge Hammer said, "I'm going to get some wood. We've got no wood."
3. Boil replied, "You're not going. You stay here. I'm going. I want to get wood."
4. Finally, all of them went to get wood.
5. Some dry spruce needles dropped on Boil, burst her, and she died.

The Nooksack version shows a preference for spruce needles as a means to lance a boil.

An Upper Chehalis version of a related Boil story, recorded from Marion Davis in 1927, is richer in detail.<sup>44</sup> It has a message similar to the Twana nursery tales discussed above but adds information about a cure:

BOIL AND EXCREMENT

1. Two old people live together in the same house.
2. They always stayed inside, never bathed, and never did any work.
3. They were pretty dirty.
4. They needed firewood pretty badly.
5. One said, "Either I go and get wood and you bathe or you go and get wood and I bathe."
6. The other replied, "I'll go down and bathe."
7. So the first one went down to a dead tree and tried to pull the bark off.
8. A part of the inner tree fell and burst his eye.
9. That was the end of Boil.
10. The second one went to the river to bathe and thereupon melted and floated; he turned into Excrement.

In this Upper Chehalis Boil (*spo7s*) story the relationship between filth, including excrement (*m3ncH*), and boils is clearly symbolized by their living together. This tale describes both a curative technique (lancing) and a preventive one (bathing in the river).

A Clackamas Chinook story, from Melville Jacobs, also discusses Louse.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the Louse stories presented above, which deal with prevention, this one suggests how to kill lice:

From GREYBACK LOUSE

1. Greyback Louse lives alone.
2. All day long she hums a short song which is wordless but comical.
3. Four Grizzly Bear brothers come to her in succession, and she drowns each one.

4. Lark tells their youngest brother what happened to them and what needs to be done to free the world of the killer.
5. When he reaches Louse, he does not go inside her house.
6. He announces that in the future, when people come, she will be changed into a mildly harmful creature that will occasionally bite people but not kill them.
7. He says that people will crack and kill her.
8. Before he leaves he does just that.

As in the Twana stories, the Chinook's Greyback Louse is a comical character. The irony is that she is the dangerous killer, not Grizzly.<sup>46</sup>

It might seem as if the preceding stories overstate the need for cleanliness in Southern Northwest Coast villages. However, based on early accounts by Euro-American visitors, that is not the case.<sup>47</sup> Since the populations of the region were bothered by other ailments, one should expect to find examples of stories that present a similar message about other types of afflictions but with characters beyond just Louse and Boil. An intriguing Upper Skagit episode within a much longer story is meant for more mature audiences and has two nonhuman participants:

#### COYOTE AND COUGH

1. Coyote is walking along the beach.
2. He hears someone coughing.
3. *stuK3b* is an old lady.
4. She is sick and lives alone in an old house.
5. She keeps on coughing.
6. He has murderous designs upon the old lady.
7. He threatens to kill her: "I am going to burn you up."
8. She claims to like the idea: "You do me good if you burn me. You just help me out!"
9. Then he tells her he will instead kill her through intercourse.
10. Now she is genuinely happy.
11. Instead of gratifying her, Coyote threatens to rub nettles over her body.
12. She gives in right away.
13. That is how he killed her and got rid of her.<sup>48</sup>

This story contains two of the elements that we would expect: Cough (*stuK3b*) is personified, and she is abstracted from the human body. This story presents a means to cure the affliction rather than to prevent it. The rubbing of nettles (Urtical iyaii) on a sick person's body was a cure for colds used by the Upper Skagit, as noted by Snyder. The same treatment was employed by the neighboring Snohomish as well.<sup>49</sup> In formulating his plan for dealing with Cough, Coyote considers burning. (The technique of moxibustion will be discussed below in connection with the story of Rattlesnake and Raccoon.) The story seems to suggest that rubbing with nettles is a treatment preferable to moxibustion in treating a cough.

But *stuK3b* is more than a plain cough. The storyteller notes that “the sickness called *StoK3b* [is] like a cold [, being] the cough that causes fever.”<sup>50</sup> The sentence *7astuQubali cH3d* means “I have the coughing kind of tuberculosis.”<sup>51</sup> The suffix *-ali* may or may not change the meaning of *stuK3b* into “coughing tuberculosis.” It appears to be the same suffix that changes the root *sHub* (“disappear”) into the stem *sHub-ali*, meaning “a number of people die.”<sup>52</sup>

The symptoms of *stuK3b*, a cough in the primary stage that develops into a fever in the secondary stage, are consistent with tuberculosis. So is its being spread from person to person.<sup>53</sup> Whooping cough can probably be ruled out because the character in the story is an old woman rather than a child.

With respect to determining the nature of this ailment, the reference to sexual intercourse is quite interesting. The storyteller notes that *stuK3b* “was meant for it. It was how she came on earth—through that stuff.”<sup>54</sup> Apparently, in the Skagit worldview *stuK3b* was passed from person to person. And the beach setting in the story could indicate that the disease passed upriver into Skagit society from the coast.

In this adult-oriented story there is a possibility that the female characterization of Cough indicates that it was women in the society who first received the infection during intercourse with Euro-Americans. In contrast to the main character’s role in the nursery tales, the role of Coyote in the adult story is destroyer of the illness; he is not the illness personified.

The following Clackamas Chinook story, meant for more mature audiences, shows that human body parts can be personified:

#### PENIS AND VULVA

1. Penis and Vulva were engaged in a foot race.
2. Penis loses because he detumesces.
3. His softening is caused by his amusement when he sees how ridiculous Vulva looks when she runs.<sup>55</sup>

The insight of this sex advice seems to be that the male should concentrate on his part of the sexual act or else run the risk of losing his erection. This abstract presentation contrasts sharply with the straightforward sexual advice a Coos man received from his father on his wedding night:

“When your wife will be fetched, you must not be bashful before her. That is how it must be. When you go to bed with her you will climb on top of her, and then you will attempt copulation.” That is the way a man spoke to his son. That is how he advised him. “When you feel something queer ([the start of] an orgasm) when you copulate with her, that is how it feels as if queer. Then you must not get away (withdraw), you will want to (as if) urinate, and then you will ejaculate, you will not quit. When finished with the queer feeling, then you may quit. That is what you wanted a wife for.”<sup>56</sup>

Another interpretation of the Penis and Vulva story is that the husband should never look at his wife’s vulva. This view is expressed by Coos teaching.<sup>57</sup>

### A Husband Must Not See His Wife Nude

A person, a straight person (i.e., a well-to-do woman), no one may ever look at her skin (i.e., genitals), even other women may not look at it. Even her very husband may not look at her something (genitals).<sup>58</sup>

The abstract stories need not always contain personified afflictions or body parts, however. In the following Twana story told by Louisa Pulsifer, the main character is Rabbit:

#### RABBIT AND THE WOLVES

1. Rabbit is the slave of the wolves.
2. He is kept captive in a cage in their den.
3. The wolves are playing the disk game.
4. Rabbit calls out in baby talk: "I'm pissing, I'm pooping."
5. One of the wolves yells, "Oh, let him out, the dirty thing!"
6. Rabbit escapes into the berry bushes and is free.<sup>59</sup>

Rabbit (*KW3cHadi*) uses health care information to his advantage in escaping the wolves (*dusHuyayub3sH*). He employs a shared cultural notion of cleanliness to free himself from captivity. But it is not clear here that Rabbit is cleverer than the wolves. They know better than to live with filth. The story seems to say that bad sanitary conditions call attention to themselves, and one is well rid of them. The double-sided, almost ambiguous, message of this story is a very early example of what has lately been called a "win-win" situation. The simple structure that conveys the complex story is quite elegant.

An Upper Skagit story told by Walter Williams conveys a lesson in life-saving techniques:

#### CRANE SAVES COYOTE'S LIFE

1. Coyote was in agony with a bone caught in his throat.
2. As he coughed and gagged he worried about what he should do.
3. Then he thought of Crane.
4. He managed to say, "Crane has such a long neck, we should call him."
5. Someone ran and found Crane.
6. When Crane arrived, Coyote gasped, "I have a bone caught in my throat!"
7. Crane readies himself and begins to work.
8. He puts his long neck down inside of Coyote's throat, finds the fish bone and removes it.
9. This is why Coyote is alive.
10. Because Crane saved him by removing that bone.<sup>60</sup>

Coyote shows us how a choking victim should call attention to the nature of his plight to a would-be rescuer. Crane represents someone with long slender fingers. That Coyote is using his body suggests to us fingers rather than an implement like a mat needle. His technique is to check for an object in the throat and then clear it out. The American Red Cross would have been impressed in an era prior to the invention of the Heimlich maneuver.

A portion of the Upper Chehalis story of Robin and Periwinkle gives instructions for dealing with severe burns:

From ROBIN AND PERIWINKLE

1. Robin was upset with his wife because she failed to bring camas home.
2. One day he put her on the fire and burnt her face.
3. She was so hot she nearly died.
4. As she rolled herself to water, rocks stuck to where she was burned.
5. She rolled into the water.
6. Robin began to regret what he did to her and went to look for her.
7. She stayed under the water.
8. The rocks that stuck to her became her house.
9. Now she was Periwinkle.<sup>61</sup>

The first message is that critical burns can be life threatening. The second is that, in treating a burn, one is not to touch it with anything because many things can adhere. Finally, it is recommended that the burn be submerged in water for a long period of time. There is also the idea that domestic violence will leave the perpetrator with feelings of remorse.

Two versions of a portion of a much longer Kathlamet Chinook myth, "Coyote's People Sing," relate the dangers of encountering a rattlesnake.

From RATTLESNAKE AND RACCOON [from Curtis 1911]

1. Another came forward and sang, making a rattling, buzzing sound.
2. This was Rattlesnake.
3. "Let nobody interfere while I sing," he warned.
4. All the people remained very quiet.
5. Someone interrupted him, impatient to move things along.
6. Rattlesnake began to rattle angrily.
7. The people were frightened.
8. Raccoon admits to having been the one who interrupted.
9. One day Raccoon was down fishing at the creek.
10. Rattlesnake decided to take his revenge.
11. Raccoon put his paw into the crack where Rattlesnake was and got bitten five times.
12. He built a fire and held his paw in it until the swelling was reduced.
13. The fire is what made Raccoon's paws black and thin.<sup>62</sup>

From RATTLESNAKE AND RACCOON [as told by Philip Kahclamet]

1. Rattlesnake rattled his tail in front of the people as he sang.
2. This scared them.
3. "Someday I'm going to bite someone and poison the one I bite."
4. Raccoon challenged him, "Your poison is no good on me. I can kill you."
5. One day Raccoon went fishing.
6. Rattlesnake hid in a rosebush and bit his foot.
7. So Raccoon made a fire and put the palm of his foot over it to burn the poison out.<sup>63</sup>

These two versions warn against disturbing a rattlesnake and stress the need to take care in locations where snakes might be hiding. They also suggest a means for relieving the human body of the snake's poison.

Burning out the agent causing the problem was one means Coyote considered and discarded, above, when figuring out the best way to deal with Cough. We suspect that Raccoon (*QalalasH*) is recommending moxibustion for dealing with snake venom. Moxibustion seems to have been available to the Kathlamet Chinook as a means to remove various pathogens. In the Twana application of the process, shredded inner-cedar bark was tightly wound into a cigar shape and wrapped with outer-cedar bark. One end was placed on the part of the body to be treated and the other end lit. "The cylinder burned down to the skin and smoldered there, leaving a round scar." This was used for "burning out the rheumatism or weakness."<sup>64</sup>

In a portion of an Upper Skagit story Coyote loses his eyes and turns to using a plant as an aid:

From COYOTE WAS LIVING THERE

1. Coyote was trapped under ice.
2. He created a hole to breathe through.
3. He looked up and saw a big bird flying around.
4. He hollered up, "You used to pick the eyes off my salmon when I used to be a fisherman."
5. Then Coyote looked through the hole and the big bird picked his eye out.
6. Coyote looked out again and the bird picked his other eye out.
7. Then Coyote worked himself free and got out of the ice.
8. Then Coyote walked along and saw s3kay'us growing from rotten wood.
9. He picked two of them and put them into his sockets and used them for eyes.<sup>65</sup>

The first community health message here deals with what to do when one is covered by an avalanche. The first thing that Coyote does is to create a hole through which he can see, yell for help, and breathe. After escaping the ice, Coyote is walking along without eyes but somehow manages to see a small red fungus growing in cup form. He picks two of the cups to serve as his eyes. The name of this red fungus in Upper Skagit is said to mean "Coyote's eyes." It is unknown whether this plant was used in a medicinal eye-wash, but the parallels to the trillium plant used by the Twana strongly suggest such a function.

In a Twana version of a related story, after Coyote loses his eyes he picks two trilliums and uses them as substitute eyes. This Twana story is meant to create a mental link between the eyes and trillium (*Trillium ovatum*). This member of the lily family was used as eyewash by the Upper Skagit and the Lummi.<sup>66</sup> The Twana, who also used it as an eyewash, associated the plant's name with the story, calling it *duxWTLa?ayasb3das t3 t3bixW* (eye of the earth).<sup>67</sup>

The final Myth Age story that we will examine deals with an individual's mental well-being and, in some way, to its connection with his or her physical

well-being. The message of the following portion of a Twana story is that living alone is not healthy when you are old; “surlly old bachelor [B]eaver” has wealth but he learns there is something more important:

From DOGFISH AND BEAVER

1. A long time ago, Beaver was a rich bachelor.
2. But he would not share his home and wealth with a wife.
3. He had plenty of food for the winter and a lodge large enough to hold a whole tribe.
4. Then he fell sick and could hardly get about.
5. He had no one to help him.
6. He was barely able to pull in cottonwood limbs to keep himself alive.
7. As he lay there wishing he had a nice sweet branch to gnaw on, he would think, “How nice it would be if I had a wife to go out and get it for me.”
8. So he sang a song to his Tamanuwas, asking that he get well, and promising to marry, for it is not good to live alone.
9. Immediately thereafter, his health began to improve.
10. He got fat, strong, and sleek again.
11. Soon there was a woman in his lodge.<sup>68</sup>

Beaver (*sTp3xWab*) kept his promise to his guardian spirit power and took “old, cross-eyed Mrs. Dog[fish]” (*sqa7atS*) as his wife.

In the tales with Myth Age settings we have encountered a fairly wide range of characterizations. We find stories featuring afflictions as characters (these stories may have animals in them but only as part of a supporting cast), stories with animals as characters, and stories with body parts as characters.

## Period 2: The Transformation Period

Thus far we have not found an example of health-related stories set in the Transformation Period. It may be that the health education message is incongruous with stories describing how the earth was altered prior to the coming of humans. We will thus move forward to the Historical Period.

## Period 3: The Historical Period

The stories of the Historical Period differ from those of the Myth Age. Jarold Ramsey characterizes “narratives set in this age” as “really more stories or tales than myths.”<sup>69</sup>

A Suquamish story, told by Lucy Mullholland,<sup>70</sup> and a Skagit story<sup>71</sup> share a common theme and derive from the same Puget Sound Salish story set in the Historical Period. The contrasting details offer a glimpse at differences between the traditions of those two tribes.

From THE OLD MAN BECOMES YOUNG

<i>Suquamish</i>	<i>Skagit</i>
	1. There was an old man who lived by himself just outside a village on the Skagit river.
2. The old man was always sick, was very dirty, had sores on his body, had lice in his hair, and was getting blind.	2. He was very old and dirty and all covered by sores. . . .
3. The members of this tribe . . . left him lying on the beach [where their camp had been].	3. The old man [left and went] far up the river to a little bend and there he buil[t] a mat shelter. At this place there was a little creek flowing into the river, and early every morning he went bathing in the creek.
4. Soon Crow came to the old man. Crow said: "Use [these coals] to build a big fire. Make a sweat house. Use it every day."	4. As he bathed he sang his guardian spirit songs and prayed to have his sores taken away.
	5. Day by day his sores disappeared and as they went [away] he became young and handsome.
6. [When the tribe returned in a year], they saw a tall, strong, good-looking, young man.	6. [In the end, he and a young girl] got married and went on to a new place and started a new village.

In both versions the old man with sores fails to participate in the economic activities of his people. While the Suquamish version has him being abandoned, the Skagit version has him leaving voluntarily. In neither version are the afflictions personified, as they might have been in tales set in the Myth Age. Although the man in the Suquamish version learns from an animal, Crow here is a spirit power and does not have the personality traits of the mythological Crow found in stories set in the earlier period, who as Raven's sister "seems born to suffer trickery and abuse."<sup>72</sup>

Here, as in some of the stories with Myth Age settings discussed above, the message is one of how cleanliness will defeat a number of afflictions, promote longevity, and give one a better, more youthful appearance. The advice is also conveyed that it is never too late for an individual to heed this message. The salient difference in the health messages of the two versions is the type of bathing. The Suquamish version employs a sweat house to remove sickness, dirt, body sores, and lice, while the Skagit version favors a dip in a cold stream to remove the body sores. The bathing was done daily in both cases.

The difference in the role of sweat bathing in the Suquamish and Skagit cultures parallels its role in their respective versions of the story. Among the Suquamish, whose complete story version touts the ceremonial benefits, one individual stated of actual practices that he had "never heard that the sweat-lodge was used in connection with the guardian spirit quest, any ceremony, [or] had any other special meaning. It was just supposed to be good for a



person to do this.”<sup>73</sup> This claim is consistent with what has been written about the purpose of sweat bathing among the other Southern Puget Sound Salish to the southeast of the Suquamish where its use seems more prevalent: “The sweat bath was used by both sexes of adult age as a matter of bodily cleanliness and physical well-being. . . . [I]t did not feature in the cure of any important or dangerous ailment.”<sup>74</sup> This use of sweat bathing differs dramatically from the reported practice of the Upper Skagit where only a “few of the older men in the upper reaches of the Skagit River took sweat baths before they went out on [spirit] quests.”<sup>75</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the Skagit version would not discuss sweat bathing.<sup>76</sup>

A Hanis Coos story warns listeners to consider closely what they eat:

#### THE YOUNG MAN ATE THE THING THAT STANK

1. A young man was married to a woman from another place (i.e., non-Coos).
2. She became lonesome and he took her back home to her parents.
3. The girl’s grandmother was at home.
4. The grandmother was cooking and eating something that stank.
5. He told his wife, in a whispered voice, “I would like what your grandmother is eating.”
6. “No, it smells badly.”
7. But he kept bothering her.
8. Finally the grandmother heard and gave him some.
9. He drank the broth.
10. He jumped and flew upwards, crying “gWa, gWa, gWa.”
11. The family yelled at the grandmother, “Why did you give it to him? You just eat anything at all!”
12. That is how the young man became a raven.<sup>77</sup>

The raven in the story is a symbol of indiscriminate gluttony. The message is that one must be selective in eating, unlike the raven, especially when the food has a foul odor. The mechanism here is the opposite of personification. The human becomes the bird appropriate to his vice.

A small part of a myth told by both the Hanis and Miluk Coos gives instruction in caring for the sick.

#### From THE TWO LOOSE WOMEN

1. Two girls came to the Lower Umpqua.
2. They asked where the wealthy head man lived.
3. They went to his house and were taken inside.
4. He was lying there with diarrhea.
5. He appeared to be ugly as he lay there.
6. The older sister disliked him.
7. But the younger sister waited on him and washed away his feces.
8. The older sister mocked, “So that is the sort of thing you like!”
9. “What if I do like him?”
10. They were there for five days.

11. Then in the morning the sick man was gone.
12. Then a handsome young man came in from swimming.
13. He addressed the younger girl, "My wife! I like you. I merely wanted to know if you indeed want me. And you really wanted me. The one who did not like me, I will not want her."<sup>78</sup>

The most obvious lesson is that one should care for the sick in spite of the fact that the ill are often not in their most attractive state. It is held out that caregivers will be rewarded for their altruistic behavior. Beyond that, though, there is useful information about diarrhea: that the feces should be cleaned away and that serious cases might require bed rest for up to five days.

Back in 1885 Eells made the point that the Twana were heeding the warning of a particular story that deals with snakes (*TSb3TSay*), but Eells saw no benefit in their doing so:

#### SNAKES

1. Long ago the Indians were not afraid of snakes.
2. A man killed a large one, a chief among the snakes.
3. Then all the small snakes attacked the man, fastening themselves on his nose, mouth, ears, eyes, and many other places, bit him and killed him.
4. From then on Indians have been afraid of snakes and have not killed them.

Eells cites an example of a woman on the Skokomish Reservation who would not walk past a harmless snake and another example of a "strong man" who would not kill one. Eells viewed the Twana in their distancing themselves from snakes as having a "superstitious fear" because there are "no venomous snakes in this region."<sup>79</sup>

Another way of viewing the situation is that the story comes from a time before the Twana came to reside on Hood Canal. The story might have originated when they and other Salishan peoples lived in the plateau region east of the Cascade Mountains. At that time the story could have been a warning against rattlesnakes. If so, then the Twana continued to follow the story's advice even after immigrating to the west side of the mountains.

A Miluk Coos tale is supposed to be "a true story of a child who lived at the time of the first coming of the whites or before" and was "recited to show how children will disobey and what fate may be theirs in consequence":<sup>80</sup>

#### THE PERSON WHO DIED FROM COLD

1. The adults were going to Camas Prairie on the Upper Coquille River and a number of children were going too.
2. One boy said, "Grandma, I want to go too."
3. "You can go but wear this blanket."
4. "Oh, I don't want to. I will not get cold," he said.
5. "So you will not get cold? Now you put on your gloves and your moccasins."
6. "Oh Grandma, I don't want them. I won't get cold."

7. The people went and he went along.
8. He fell behind and was not there when they arrived at the prairie.
9. One of the people went back and, sure enough, found him dead, stiff from the cold.
10. He returned and told the news to the grandmother.
11. "Humph, I guess he was not so great and that is why he died. I tried to give him things to wear but he did not want them. He said he would not get cold."

The message in the following story fragment may be less transparent than the rest. Indeed, we would not have included it had it not been for an actual Indian woman<sup>81</sup> who did as we believe this Quileute story<sup>82</sup> suggests:

From THUNDERBIRD AND THE WHALE

1. Long ago, for days and days the great storms blew.
2. Rain and hail and then sleet and snow came down upon the land.
3. The hailstones were so large that many people were killed.
4. The Quileute people were driven from their coastal village to the prairie that was the highest point of their territory.
5. The people grew thin and weak from hunger.
6. The hailstones had beaten down the ferns and the camas and the berries.
7. Ice locked the rivers so that the men could not fish.
8. Storms rocked the ocean so that fishermen could not go out in their canoes for deep-sea fishing.
9. Soon the people had eaten all the grass and roots on the prairie.
10. There was no food left.

The story presents messages similar to those that emanated from the old Civil Defense program. The first is that in times of coastal flooding one should move to higher ground. The second message is that when the usual food supplies are not available, one should look to roots and grass that would perhaps not otherwise be tapped. Thompson has recorded an incident in which a Sahewamish woman actually ate grass. The woman, from west of Olympia, was married to a Quinault and living among his people in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>83</sup> One time when she ran out of food, after being abandoned by her abusive husband, she was reduced to eating grass to survive.<sup>84</sup>

Stories in the Historical Period can also involve mental health issues. There is evidence that individuals within these cultures were subject to the "internal cultural stresses and social pressures of small-group, kin-based living."<sup>85</sup> The well-being of individuals coming into contact with spirit powers was also of concern.

A Klallam story, told by Louisa Pulsifer, contains wolves, as does "Rabbit and the Wolves," but in quite a different time setting.<sup>86</sup> The setting of this story is not prior to the arrival of humans. In this story we find humans interacting with wolves that have a dual persona. They are able to confer spirit power and yet also to be animals:

*QW3TSXay*

1. The young men were playing a ball game.
2. The objective was to out-battle the others to catch a thrown ball in the air.
3. One of them, *QW3TSXay*, was too short, too small and too unathletic to ever catch the ball.
4. After the game, he walked away into the woods and bathed.
5. When he got tired he lay down and slept.
6. Wolves saw him sleeping and took pity on him.
7. Upon awaking, he went home.
8. At first the other young men did not recognize the tall, muscular, handsome individual that *QW3TSXay* had become.
9. When they played the ball game, he was now the best player.
10. One of the others asked him about his secret.
11. That young man ran off into the woods and was eaten by the wolves.

The story of *QW3TSXay* contains several lessons: (a) don't give up on yourself; (b) cleanliness is required in gaining power; (c) physical frailty can be overcome with spirit power; and (d) don't be selfish in trying to gain spirit power only for yourself.

A Snoqualmie story told by Jerry Kanim discusses the problem of a sick man, called *Laleewa*, who is confronted with the custom of marrying the widow of his recently deceased brother:

*LALEEWA (laliwa)*

1. His father told him to ask her if she would accept him, *Laleewa*, as a husband.
2. *Laleewa* responded, "I think she wouldn't like me because I'm sick. My skin is scarred."
3. His father advised him to ask her if she would wait until he was well.
4. He took off her clothes while she was sleeping and woke her.
5. He asked her if she would have him when he was over his illness.
6. She said she would tell him later.
7. Another day she brought him a piece of her clothes where he had grabbed her because she did not want her "skin to become rotten."
8. He went inland toward the mountains. He washed himself until his skin was restored to normal.
9. He returned the piece of cloth to her.
10. She wiped her face with it and her face became scarred.
11. She scratched her face irritation and she became sick.
12. She became scarred all over her body.
13. She died.<sup>87</sup>

The label *laliwa* is not a real name but rather indicates someone who truly needs instruction. He is the opposite of the youngest-smartest brother seen above in the story of the Greyback Louse.

Skagits explained why there should be differences among brothers and sisters with a “learning theory” which is reflected by and was probably reinforced by folkloristic expressions of the themes, youngest-smartest and oldest-dullest. The theory states that the youngest of a normally-spaced sibling series, that is, of brothers and sisters no more than three or four years apart, is the most obedient of them and therefore develops into the most successful adult. . . . Skagits perceived that siblings exert socializing influences upon one another. Informants asserted that a first child, an only child, or a child reared among already adolescent or adult siblings, was likely to become spoiled. He lacked the advantage of having had at least one sibling a few years older from whom he learned. A child who lacked older siblings was therefore not expected to amount to much, primogeniture notwithstanding. If he fulfilled the lamentable expectations of his unfortunate role, he or she was referred to as a *lali’wa*. No English word covers the connotations of this term. For convenience I refer to the concept as “oldest-dullest.” It suggests that the oldest of either sex is slow-witted and credulous, and usually lazy and careless.<sup>88</sup>

The character *laliwa* is used as a foil, like Goofus in the children’s *Highlights* serial “Goofus and Gallant” that began back in the mid-1950s. A *laliwa* in a story, whether a human, mammal, or fish, can be viewed as being a “goofy boy,” as one Upper Skagit referred to the character.<sup>89</sup> Don’t do anything as stupid as what Laliwa has done is the message.<sup>90</sup>

The purpose of the story is to detail specific disease-prevention lessons: have no physical contact with the sick, dispose of contaminated clothing, do not scratch the skin, and bathe in fresh water (rather than salt water). These teachings are probably instructive warnings about smallpox. Smallpox was the first disease epidemic known to have reached the Southern Coast Salish, in the late 1780s. Smallpox is an infectious viral disease that may be spread by physical contact or through contact with items that have been in close contact with the infected person. A rash that may leave disfiguring marks appears after about two weeks, and other long-term effects follow. When George Vancouver’s expedition came in May 1792 to Hood Canal and Puget Sound, they saw pockmark scars and evidence of lost vision that they concluded had been caused by the disease.<sup>91</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Stories were used among the cultures of the Southern Northwest Coast as a means of teaching rules of conduct and ethics. Storytelling was undertaken at a particular time (something akin to an academic year) and under particular circumstances by a cadre of storytellers from among the community elders. In this article we have established that a subgroup of those folktales was used as a medium for the dissemination of health care information to the general populace. Stories from the region are seen to present a wide array of illness prevention and cure teachings. They cover afflictions of various levels of

seriousness, from boils to smallpox. The stories define health broadly and thus deal with both physical and mental well-being.

The health-related stories stem perhaps from before the present languages diverged to what may be preserved history from more than two hundred years ago. The structure of the stories ranges from nursery tales to racy folktales to purported historic accounts. The nature of the stories suggests a fairly sophisticated pedagogy. The peoples of the Southern Northwest Coast clearly had a notion regarding developmental psychology. They distinguished the maturational level of youngsters based on age, gender, and birth order. Thus, each of the story types presents kinds of information appropriate for a certain age level.

The stories set in the Myth Age are finely crafted teaching tools, a number of them specifically aimed at young children. Quite a number of the tales deal with cleanliness and sanitation topics. Across these cultures, when afflictions such as boils and lice are personified, they are portrayed as comical. Personification of the ailments as old women may be related to old women being the most common group of individuals telling the stories. Personification is of particular interest with respect to the nursery level tales. The main character of the story not only represents the disease to be destroyed but also represents the destroyer (if we accept that the one who teaches how to destroy is a destroyer in an indirect capacity). Thus the ironic self-destructiveness of the main character is underscored by combining the roles of both the disease and its major nemesis in one character.

One of the most effective and common literary devices used in myths is the presentation of actors in contrasting pairs.<sup>92</sup> This device is found in myths with health lessons, such as "Boil-in-the-Anus and Small Hammer," "Penis and Vulva," and "Rabbit and the Wolves." With all that said about the instructional purposes of the tales, it should be remembered that the Myth Age stories were also entertaining. They were not recited solely because they offered lessons. They were also told "because they were great stories, great fun."<sup>93</sup>

Although there are other types of didactic tales set in the Transformation Period, we have found no health education stories set in that epoch. The dichotomy with regard to the health training stories set in the Myth Age and the Historic Period and the lack of such stories set in the Transformation Period may support the view of Collins and Snyder that there are but two periods and the so-called Transformation Period is at the end of the Myth Age.

The material set in the Historical Period is told as history rather than as stories and, in comparison to that set in the Myth Age, lacks much of the literary value. These Historical Period compositions are much drier than and not nearly as engaging as the Myth Age tales. In each of the health-related Historical Period stories, the main character is human. It appears from the nature of the material that the right behavior, as well as the analytical methodology and the technology (cause and effect are still present, for example), is assumed to be known by the listener. There is no attempt to teach. Rather, the purpose is to indoctrinate: the stories have the subtlety of "Just Say No!" advertisements of the late twentieth century. Here the listeners listened not because of the sugarcoating but because they knew they should.

It is probably meaningful that in each of the eight Myth Age stories discussed above the afflictions presented (Louse, Boil, Cough, and Boil-in-the-Anus) are personified as old women.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, Historical Period stories contain no personifications of this type. We noted above the anomaly with respect to the longer version of the Louse story, where the grammar demands that we interpret the louse as masculine.

This study of these didactic tales reveals a great deal about the culture of their creators. One of the more important revelations is that the stories are structured in ways that indicate a sophisticated analytic method. Perhaps even more important is the quality of the art involved, especially in the Myth Age examples. These brief works exhibit abstraction, personification, powerful irony, and other elements that seem to us to reflect a mature literary sense. But this study also leaves us with important questions about the culture in question. In particular, we wonder why the stories set in the Historical Period use literary tropes and techniques less than those in the Myth Age.

In an attempt to answer this question we considered that the two settings, Myth Age and Historical Period, might actually represent two different story creation periods. That is, we considered that Myth Age stories might, in fact, be older than Historical Period stories. This would imply that there was a drop off in literary quality through time. A review of our examples, however, has shown this not to be the case. We have found no evidence to suggest that the two story types have ever been different from what they are now, contemporaneous genres. The story of Coyote and Cough demonstrates that newer stories were indeed set in the older period. This story is a Myth Age tale that discusses an introduced disease. As such, it indicates that it is not the nature of the ailment that determines the story setting, nor is it the case that Historical Period stories were necessarily developed later than Myth Age tales.

## NOTES

1. June McCormick Collins, *Valley of the Spirits: The Upper Skagit Indians of Western Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 213. The use of stories as educational tools was distinct from yet supplemental to the more direct formal instruction (also referred to as “advice” or moral training) provided to children and adolescents that is described by Collins, as well as by William W. Elmendorf (*The Structure of Twana Culture* [Pullman: Washington University, 1960]); and Wayne Suttles (“Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” *American Anthropologist* 60 [1958]: 497–507); among others.

2. Ella E. Clark, *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 129. Vi Hilbert, trans., *Haboo: Native American Stories from Puget Sound* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), x, includes the “washing away of badness” in a list of “important values” passed along by traditional stories.

3. An earlier and more geographically restricted version of this article was presented at the 29th International Conference on Salish and Neighboring Languages and appeared in the conference preprints (Nile Robert Thompson and C. Dale Sloat, “Southern Coast Salish Oral Literature and Health Education,” in *Papers for the 29th International Conference on Salish and Neighboring Languages* (Pablo, MT: Kootenai



College, 1994), 313–20). We express our gratitude to the late Louisa Pulsifer for sharing her knowledge of Twana stories and other aspects of traditional culture. We thank Sarah Thomason for her encouragement and also acknowledge Sally Snyder for passing along her materials (dissertation and field notes) prior to her death with the expressed wish that something be done to examine and expand her analyses of Upper Skagit stories.

4. Edward C. Green, *Indigenous Theories of Contagious Disease* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999).

5. George M. Guilmet, Robert T. Boyd, David L. Whited, and Nile Thompson, “The Legacy of Introduced Disease: The Southern Coast Salish,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 15, no. 4 (1991): 3.

6. Among the health care specialists on the Southern Northwest Coast were the doctor, the herbalist, the midwife, and the diviner (Hermann Haerberlin and Erna Gunther, “The Indians of Puget Sound,” *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 4, no. 1 [1930]: 43–44, 75–76). [Subsequently reprinted as a monograph by the University of Washington Press.]

7. Melville Jacobs, *People Are Coming Soon: Analysis of Clackamas Chinook Myths and Tales* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), ix.

8. The population of these peoples at the time of first recorded contact (1792) has been estimated at 1,187 for the Nooksack, 11,835 for the Puget Sound Salish, 774 for the Twana, 2,880 for the Upper Chehalis, 3,208 for the Klallam, and 630 for the Quileute (Robert T. Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence* [Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999], 264–65).

9. The precontact population for Upper Chinook (which includes the Clackamas and Kathlamet) is estimated at 9,288 (Robert T. Boyd, “Demographic History, 1774–1874,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7, ed. Wayne Suttles [Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990], 136). The estimate for the Coos is 2,250 (Boyd, *Spirit of Pestilence*, 264).

10. The Suquamish Museum, *The Eyes of Chief Seattle* (exhibit catalogue) (Suquamish, WA: Suquamish Museum, 1985), 14.

11. Sally Snyder, “Skagit Society and Its Existential Basis: An Ethnofolkloristic Reconstruction” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1964), 24.

12. Thelma Adamson, unarranged sources of Chehalis ethnology [1926–27], University Archives, University of Washington Libraries, n.d., 385.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Elmendorf, *Structure of Twana Culture*, 411.

15. *Ibid.*, 430.

16. S. Snyder, “Skagit Society,” 25–26. These contrast with another form of verbal presentation, which “in one informant’s words, are ‘dirty stories,’ comparable to our smutty jokes.”

17. Elizabeth Derr Jacobs, *Nehalem Tillamook Tales* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1959), ix. Jarold Ramsey, *Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), xxiv.

18. Collins (*Valley of the Spirits*, 211–13) maintains that the history and, thus, the oral literature of the peoples of interest here are divided into but two periods. For her, myths recount the remote past when the world was different, whereas folktales are set in a more recent time. Presumably, she views the changes made by the several



transformers as coming at the end of the Myth Age. S. Snyder ("Skagit Society," 26–27) agrees with the division into two periods. She divides Upper Skagit myths into two named periods: (1) the Myth Era (*siyahu'B*) and (2) True Stories (*t3hLsiyatS3b*). But she does clarify the position of the Transformation Period stories. According to her the transformation stories "were told as myths although they are placed at a later time . . . in Skagit history, in [a] time [that was] transitional [between] the Myth Age and . . . the present condition of the world."

The orthography used here for forms in the various American Indian languages is a slightly revised version of the Twana Practical Alphabet that was adopted by the Skokomish Indian Tribe in 1975 (see Nile Thompson, *Twana Dictionary: Student Version* [Shelton, WA: Twana Language Project, Skokomish Tribe, 1979], vii–viii). The alphabet is adapted for language learners of English and can be used on the computer or the Internet without a special font. In general, glottalization is represented by capitalization. The letters H, L, S, and W are used in combination with others to form affricates, the voiceless alveopalatal fricative, the voiceless alveolar lateral, and labialization, rather than employing Greek and Czech letters and raised *w*'s as is done in the field of linguistics. The ʒ represents a schwa, and ʔ is a glottal stop. Thus, for example, the English word *chutes* is represented as *sHutS*.

19. Collins, *Valley of the Spirits*, 211.

20. Ramsey, *Coyote Was Going There*, xxiv.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Elmendorf, *Structure of Twana Culture*, 536.

23. Sally Snyder, unpublished Skagit ethnographic field notes.

24. M. Jacobs, *People Are Coming Soon*, x.

25. William W. Elmendorf, "Skokomish and Other Coast Salish Tales, Part 1," *Research Studies* 29 (1962): 8–9.

26. Ramsey, *Coyote Was Going There*, xxiv.

27. S. Snyder, unpublished Skagit ethnographic field notes.

28. *Ibid.*, 28–29.

29. Myron Eells, *The Indians of Puget Sound: The Notebooks of Myron Eells*, ed. George Pierre Castille (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 265.

30. E. D. Jacobs, *Nehalem Tillamook Tales*, ix.

31. Many of the story abstracts presented here have been abbreviated in order to highlight health care teaching over other messages. For a full version of the stories please consult the originals. The titles for example stories, both complete stories and segments, have been preserved from the original sources. Where no title is provided, one has been supplied using the prevailing formula. For a discussion of myth titles see Dell Hymes, "In Vain I Tried to Tell You," *Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 263–73.

32. Nile Thompson, "An Odyssey to the Discovery of Nursery Tales in Twana," in *On the Translation of Native American Literatures*, ed. Brian Swann (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 176–90.

33. We have tried in all cases to avoid extremes of interpretation, going only where the structure of a story takes us. However, the stories from the Myth Age are lower on the scale of externalization (as defined by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, ed. William R. Trask [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953], 23) than are the stories of the Historical Period.

Thus, to get a reasonable reading of stories of the Myth Age, such as the Louse story, for instance, it is necessary to recognize the irony involved in Louse's participation in its own destruction. Further, our interest in analyzing the stories is not to apply cultural knowledge about the subject at hand but rather to derive such knowledge. We, of course, have some knowledge of the context in which the story exists; for example, we assume that the stories are didactic, but with regard to the internals of the story we are interested in learning what their cultural meaning is, given that context.

34. Ramsey, *Coyote Was Going There*, xxix.

35. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 17 (New York: Americana Corporation, 1960), 797.

36. This character, *b3sCH3'd*, is the head louse. The Twana differentiated between that type of louse and the white body louse (*qWati'X3*) and the pubic louse (*CHaCHa'hLu*) (Nile Thompson, *A Preliminary Dictionary of the Twana Language* [Shelton, WA: Twana Language Project, Skokomish Indian Tribe, 1978], 41, 44a, 210).

37. S. Snyder, "Skagit Society," 6.

38. The floor of a traditional Twana house was bare and was frequently swept to remove the top layer of dirt. When the house's floor "became too filthy, it [the house] was easily removed a short distance" (Eells, *Indians of Puget Sound*, 31).

39. Hartley Burr Alexander, *North American*, vol. 10 of *The Mythology of All Races*, ed. Louis Herbert Gray (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1916), xviii.

40. Thompson, "An Odyssey," 185.

41. S. Snyder, "Skagit Myths and Tales," appendix to "Skagit Society and Its Existential Basis," 157–58.

42. Elmendorf, *Structure of Twana Culture*, 250.

43. S. Snyder, "Skagit Myths and Tales," 158.

44. Thelma Adamson, "Folk-Tales of the Coast Salish," *Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society* 27 (1934): 131–32.

45. M. Jacobs, *People Are Coming Soon*, 233–36.

46. Louse is not just a humorous story character for the Coast Salish people either. Like many other life-forms, it is also a potential spirit power. The following is a description for the Katzie on the lower Fraser River in southern British Columbia: "Lice.—Old Pierre had known two Indians who claimed to have this spirit, the lice of the north wind. One, a man, was a splendid sturgeon-hunter because, as he said, the lice kept sturgeon in motion; the other, a Katzie woman, was an industrious worker, for lice are never still. They chanted different songs, but in their dancing both spun around like tops" (Diamond Jenness, "The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian," *Anthropology in British Columbia*, Memoir 3 [1955]: 56).

47. Fleas and maggots were particularly noted as settling in the seasonally abandoned habitations. When some of Vancouver's crew went into a Chinook village on the north side of the Columbia River near its mouth in 1792, they couldn't wait to get away. Edward Bell has this to say: "[They] went up to look at this village, but when they got up to it, they were surrounded with swarms of fleas that soon settled in quantities on their clothes. They were all obliged to run into the water to rid themselves of their unpleasant companions" (Harry M. Majors, *Exploring Washington* [New Holland, MI: Van Winkle, 1975], 114).

In 1813 a Northwest Company party visited a Chinook village near what is now Ilwaco, Washington, and was certainly not impressed with the sanitation. Alexander

Henry reports that “fleas abound in these villages. . . . These houses [are] exceedingly filthy, sturgeon and salmon being strewn about in every direction . . . so surrounded by fish offals and excrements that it demands the utmost precaution in walking to avoid them” (ibid., 114).

A Hudson’s Bay Company expedition passing through Lower Chehalis territory in 1824 could well see the need to push for cleanliness: “About their habitations there is a complete bank of filth and nastiness. At this wet season it is a complete mess mixed with offal of fish and dirt of every kind. . . . About and even in the houses [the area was] literally alive with maggots which had generated in the offal of fish, and the stench was most offensive” (T. C. Elliott, “Journal of John Work, November and December, 1824,” *Washington Historical Quarterly* 3 [1912]: 206).

48. S. Snyder, “Skagit Myths and Tales,” 73–74.

49. Erna Gunther, “Ethnobotany of Western Washington: The Knowledge and Use of Indigenous Plants by Native Americans,” *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 10 (1945): 28. [Subsequently reprinted by the University of Washington Press.]

50. S. Snyder, “Skagit Myths and Tales,” 73–74. The use of the back mid-vowel *o* for the back high vowel *u* in Puget Sound Salish is at times phonologically conditioned. Elsewhere, as here, it probably reflects a dialectic preference.

51. Dawn Bates, Thom Hess, and Vi Hilbert, *Lushootseed Dictionary* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 230.

52. Ibid., 213.

53. American Medical Association, *Family Medical Guide*, ed. Charles B. Clayton, 3rd ed. (New York: Random House, 1994), 602.

54. S. Snyder, “Skagit Myths and Tales,” 74.

55. M. Jacobs, *People Are Coming Soon*, 352.

56. This story, as told by Annie Miller Peterson, is recorded in Melville Jacobs, “Coos Narrative and Ethnologic Texts,” *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 8 (1939): 74.

57. Ibid., 81.

58. A midwife would probably be an exception to this rule.

59. Nile Thompson, unpublished Twana field notes, 1975–2002.

60. Hilbert, *Haboo*, 167.

61. Thelma Adamson, unarranged sources, 237.

62. Hymes, “In Vain I Tried to Tell You,” 246–51.

63. Ibid., 252–59.

64. Elmendorf, *Structure of Twana Culture*, 250.

65. S. Snyder, “Skagit Society,” 61–64.

66. Gunther, “Ethnobotany of Western Washington,” 26.

67. Thompson, *A Preliminary Dictionary*, 285.

68. Ethel M. Dalby, *Tales of Hood Canal* (Shelton, WA: Mason County Historical Society, 2000), 105–7.

69. Ramsey, *Coyote Was Going There*, xxiv.

70. Warren A. Snyder, “Southern Puget Sound Salish: Text, Place Names, and Dictionary,” *Sacramento Anthropological Society Paper* 9 (1968): 89.

71. This story was collected by Hermann Haeberlin and is housed in the Erna Gunther Collection, University of Washington Library.

72. Elmendorf, "Skokomish and Other Coast Salish Tales," 14.
73. Warren Snyder with Jay Miller, "Suquamish Traditions," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 33, no. 1 (1999): 118.
74. Marian W. Smith, "The Puyallup-Nisqually," *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology* 32 (1940): 122.
75. Collins, *Valley of the Spirits*, 180.
76. This story may offer insight into the role of grandmothers as teachers among the Southern Coast Salish. Mrs. Mullholland took her tribal identity from her mother, Amelia Sneatlum (W. Snyder, "Southern Puget Sound Salish," 1). It is likely that the former learned the story from her maternal grandmother, Lucy Allen Williams Snider (*tabixWyud*), a Suquamish whose father was a nephew of Chief Seattle (see F. A. Gross to Frank Malloy, 25 July 1950 [original correspondence on file at Puget Sound Indian Agency; copy at Suquamish Archives]; and W. Snyder, "Southern Puget Sound Salish," 99). However, Amelia Sneatlum's second husband, the probable father of Lucy, came from a Skagit family on Whidbey Island. Thus, the story might not have been Suquamish at all but rather a coastal Skagit version in contrast to an upriver Skagit version.
77. Melville Jacobs, "Coos Myth Texts," *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (1940): 182–83.
78. *Ibid.*, 143–46.
79. Eells, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 18 July 1885 (quoted in Eells, *Indians of Puget Sound*, 263–64).
80. M. Jacobs, "Coos Narrative and Ethnologic Texts," 39.
81. Thompson, unpublished Twana field notes, 1975–2002.
82. This story, as told by Jack Ward, is in Clark, *Indian Legends*, 161–62.
83. Nile Thompson, Puget Sound Salish field notes.
84. Abusive husbands have been noted elsewhere in the region. One Coos woman said that her husband, in the 1890s, "beat me all the time, though I did nothing wrong. Nevertheless he beat me. A chaser, he consorted with (other) women all the time" (M. Jacobs, "Coos Narrative and Ethnologic Texts," 107).
85. Guilmet et al, "Legacy of Introduced Disease," 5.
86. Thompson, unpublished Twana field notes, 1975–2002.
87. W. Snyder, "Southern Puget Sound Salish," 53–59.
88. S. Snyder, "Skagit Society," 240–41.
89. *Ibid.*, 242.
90. It is unlikely that W. Snyder realized that *Laleewa* was a label rather than a personal name. Indeed, Kanim states, "Laleewa was the name of the young man." This would explain why the word does not appear in Snyder's dictionary included in the same volume. The most recent Puget Sound Salish dictionary (Bates, Hess, and Hilbert, *Lushootseed Dictionary*) also fails to include the culturally significant form *laliwa*.
91. [Archibald] Menzies, *Journal of Vancouver's Voyage, April to October, 1792*, ed. C. F. Newcombe, Archives of British Columbia Memoir 5 (1923): 29; George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific and Round the World*, vol. 2 (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1798), 241–42; Peter Puget, "Log of the Discovery, May 7–June 11, 1792," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1939): 198.
92. S. Snyder, "Skagit Society," 18.
93. Hymes, "In Vain I Tried to Tell You," 22.

94. Not all appearances of personified afflictions are accompanied by medical instruction. In a Puyallup story Louse was the first wife of Loon's son. She was a pretty woman who had a child, went blind from weeping and had her features and vision restored by Thunder's Daughter (Arthur C. Ballard, "Mythology of Southern Puget Sound," *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology* 3 [1929]: 101-3).