

huuḥtakšiiḥẏak • Lesson 55
himwi̇ca • Telling folktales

ʔuwii • Introduction

Folktales are traditional stories about a long-ago time. They are entertaining, but also convey important teachings that have been learned through many generations. In this lesson, you will learn to tell short, simple versions of some traditional folktales, and to share their teachings.

We will start by comparing different genres of oral literature, and will then practise a procedure for learning to tell a folktale without reading. You will also develop your ability to compose sentences, and to make stories sound more natural.

huuḥtakšičaya • Beginning

Folktales are just one of several genres of Nuuchahnulth oral literature. Other genres include history, teachings, and ancestor stories. Know the difference between these verbs and nouns.

- ʔiiqḥuk v. tell it (information)
- ʔuumitaqa v. telling (narrative)
- ʔiyaqḥmis n. information, news, history
- ḥaaḥuupa v. teaching it
- ḥaaḥuupaʔak n. teaching, lesson
- himwića v. telling a folktale
- himwićaqʔak n. folktale
- ʔeʔiićaʔin v. telling an ancestor story
- ʔeʔiićaʔinyak n. ancestor story

Traditionally, people learned to tell folktales by listening to their elders tell them many times. Eventually, they would start telling the stories themselves. But those apprentice storytellers already spoke their language fluently. If you're studying these lessons, then you're probably still learning your language.

We will therefore practise a method for non-fluent speakers to learn to tell folktales. The method consists of these steps:

- Compose a version that you can tell from memory.
- Practise telling the story.
- When you're ready, start adding details.
- Change the story a little bit every time you tell it.

Below is a short version of *The bird and animal war*. Compose a version of this that you can tell without reading. Then with a partner, take turns telling your versions. If you can't remember something, then drop it or tell it another way.

(1) níλaakwítasitwe?in maamaatištup hitačink saštup. (2) na?uukmiḥsawe?in maapiismít. (3) wikee?ic maamaati, waawee?in čix^watinmít. (4) wikee?ic saštup, waawee?in q^wayačiikmít. (5) wiiwiiqčapšiλwe?in maapiismít.

The birds and animals were going to fight. Bat wanted to join them. Eagle said, “You aren't a bird.” Wolf said, “You aren't a four-legged animal.” Bat got sad.

With a partner, take turns telling your own versions of a folktale.
Use the following mini-conversation set each other up.

1A. himwićamiḥsahak. Do you want to tell a folktale?

1A. himwiće?i..... Tell a folktale.

1B. čuu, himwićaaqḷah. Okay, I will tell a folktale.

1B. haa?a, himwićamiḥsamah.. Yes, I want to tell a folktale.

1B. wikmiḥsamah himwića. I don't want to tell a folktale.

1B. wikap'is..... Let me not. I pass.

Change the story every time you tell it. For example, you need to be able to make it shorter or longer, depending on how much time you have. For small children, you might want to use simpler words. You might want to state the teachings of the story explicitly, or let your audience infer them for themselves.

Strategies for sounding more natural:

1. Default to neutral mood when appropriate.
 2. Use *–!aʔ* to connect events into a narration.
 3. Use passive *–!at* to keep the main character at the centre of the action.
- ∞ Exercise. Combine the following stems with the ‘he, she, it’ forms of the real, hearsay, and neutral moods.
- ʔunaak, ʔunaakma, ʔunaakweʔin, ʔunaak
 - qii
 - ʔusim
 - wik

∞ Exercise. Practise adding *–!aʔ* and *–!at* to these stems:

- naʔuuk, naʔuuk^waʔ, naʔuuk^wat, naʔuuk^waʔat
- ʔiʔaak, ʔiʔaakaʔ, ʔiʔaakat, ʔiʔaakaʔat
- waa, waaʔaʔ, waaʔat, waaʔaʔat
- –ʔiʔ, –ʔiʔaʔ, –ʔiʔat, –ʔiʔaʔat
- –miʔsa, –miʔsaʔ, –miʔsat, –miʔsaʔat

Take turns telling this short version of *Fawn counts snow*. Notice Fawn’s different way of talking. If you find it too difficult to count Fawn’s way, then just count normally.

(1) ?unah?isitwe?in haak^waaλ?is muwač tiictix. (2) huksaamihsawe?in k^wiis. (3) huksči?aλwe?in waa—λawaak, ?aλa, qaλλa, muu, huλa. (4) ?aa?aayapiwe?in k^wiis. (5) ʔaʔinčksuuλwe?in tiictix.

Fawn was a little girl deer. She wanted to count the snowflakes. She started counting, saying, “One, two, three, four, five.” But there were too many snowflakes. Fawn went cross-eyed.