

# Sk'elép Juggles His Eyes

## A Secwépemc Stsptékwll (Story)

**Storytelling plays an important role in Secwépemc culture, imparting life lessons, knowledge and teachings to all who listen. Ancestral stories were traditionally passed down orally.**

This stsptékwll (story) is an example of ethnobiological knowledge. The awareness of which trees grow in certain elevations and locations helped Sk'elép (coyote) to find his way home. Sk'elép is known as both a trickster and a helper. Stories tell of Sk'elép's abilities to transform into anything or even die and come back to life. Sk'elép is used in stories to help people realize the consequences of their actions by setting an example of how to behave properly and live with intention.



### SECWÉPEMC CULTURAL USES OF PLANTS

The trees and shrubs mentioned within the Coyote Juggles His Eyes stsptékwll have cultural uses, such as for food, medicines, tools, and spiritual purposes.

Kamloops Naturalist Club

**M-nes ne secplúikw re senxwéxwlecw.**  
Coyote went to a gathering.  
**M-séysus.**  
He gambled.  
**Xwexwéyt te stem re 'tecwentésés re qelmúcw.**  
And he beat the people at everything.  
**Ícwum xwexwéyt.**  
He won everything.  
**M-kúcsentem yerí7 te qelmúcw.**  
The people envied him.  
**M-tsúncem es neq'citem te spipyúy7e, es kwéctem te ckwústens.**  
The [bird] people wanted to steal them and take them from him.  
**Yerí7 re setsé7.**  
And there was Raven.  
**M-tsuns-ekwe es kwéctems te ckwústens re setsé7,**  
Raven wanted to take his eyes away from him.  
**M-tsuns-ekwe, "Xelxílíp, xelxléq!"**  
He told the Coyote, "Throw them up high and stick them back in."  
**Kwéctem te ckwetkwústens.**  
[Coyote] had his eyes taken from him.  
**Kllékstmentmes es pelqílcs.**  
They let him go to return home.  
**M-plépes re senxwéxwlecw.**  
And Coyote was lost.

#### Ísellp (Spruce)

- sap used as a topical remedy for skin abrasions
- boughs used as teas and body wash



#### Tseqwtseqwélqw (Red Osier Dogwood/Red Willow)

- branches used for making fish traps, poles, and salmon stretchers
- used to make sweat lodge frames



#### Elkéllp (Kinnikinnick)

- leaves are made into a tea
- berries used in soups and teas
- spiritual uses



**7ek telrí7,**  
He went along the way from there,  
**mesmúsens stéui es pepéns es kúlems te ckwetkwústens.**  
and he felt for something he could find to use as eyes.  
**Pelmíns re elk, re elkéllp te speq'éq,**  
He found some kinnikinnick, some kinnikinnick berries.  
**m-kwénses, xelxílqenses ne ckwústens.**  
And he took them and stuck them in his eyes.  
**M-wíkmes, kéme'll petéw's put k sle7s k swíkems.**  
He could see, but he couldn't see too well.  
**M-sesúxwenstes te m-t7ek,**  
And he went down along the way,  
**m-séwenses re tsrep'p,**  
and he asked the trees,  
**"Stémi ye7éne tek tsrep-k?"**  
"What kind of tree is this?"  
**Emétctmes te skwest.s re tsrep: "Seléwllp."**  
The tree told him its name: "White Pine"  
**Í7ek trí7 re senxwéxwlecw,**  
Coyote went along the way again,  
**Írí7 m-séwenses nerí7 nekú7 te tsrep,**  
He asked this other tree,  
**"Stémi tek tsrep-k?"**  
"What kind of tree are you?"  
**"Ísellp ren s7emetentsúst."**  
"Spruce is what I call myself"

#### Meltèllp (Trembling Aspen)

- branches of saplings and small trees used for making tent poles and drying racks



**Tsut re senxwéxwlecw, "yerí7, yerí7 ren sesúsxwenst!"**  
Coyote said, "That's it, I am going down!"  
**M-séwens cúytsem,**  
He asked someone again,  
**"Stémi ye7éne te tsrep-k?"**  
"What kind of tree are you?"  
**"Melénllp"**  
"Subalpine Fir"  
**7ek te m-sesúsxwenst, m-séwenses re tsrep'p,**  
He went on down, and he asked [another] tree,  
**"Stémi tek tsrep-k?"**  
"What kind of tree are you?"  
**"Mulc"**  
"Cottonwood"  
**"Yerí7, yerí7 ren sme7é7ey," tsut-ekwe re senxwéxwlecw.**  
"That's it, I'm getting close!" said Coyote.  
**Yerí7 re m-sí7ek, séwens nekú7 le tsrep.**  
Here he came, and he asked another tree.  
**M-sesúxwenst, "q'wlséllp"**  
He was told, "Willow" (Red Osier Dogwood)  
**M-sesúxwenst, cúytsem,**  
He went down again,  
**m-sulltímcwes, "stémi le tsrep?"**  
and asked around, "What kind of trees [are there]?"  
**"Meltèllp:"**  
"Trembling aspen"

#### Mulc (Black Cottonwood)

- fluff used for pillows
- trunk commonly used for dugout canoes
- young buds used as glue and for waterproofing



#### Melénllp (Subalpine Fir)

- important medicine plant
- pitch chewed to clean teeth
- bark used for large baskets stitched together with spruce roots
- boughs used for bedding and flooring in sweat lodges



**"Yerí7 ren sme7é7ey!"**  
"There, I'm close!"  
**Qwetséts telrí7 re skélep, telrí7 re senxwéxwlecw,**  
Coyote, the one they call the "ground runner", left again,  
**Írí7 m-sulltímcwes,**  
and he asked around again,  
**"Stémi ri7 tek tsrep-k?"**  
"What kind of trees are there?"  
**M-lexéy'ectem, tsúntmes, "speq'q'éllp."**  
And he was told, they told him, "saskatoon bushes"  
**"Yerí7 ren skiktsc:"**  
"I have arrived" [he said].  
**Le-kítscwes, re spipyúy7e m-tsúnses, "Xelxílíp xelxléq."**  
When he had arrived, the birds told him, "Throw them up high and stick them back in!"  
**Must.s-ekwe.**  
Four times, they said, he did that.  
**Yerí7 re spelqílcs re ckwetkwústens.**  
And his eyes came back.  
**M-wíkmes cúytsem.**  
And he could see again.  
**M-yews ri7 re sle7s re senxwéxwlecw.**  
And Coyote was all right again.  
**M-w7écwes telrí7.**  
And he carried on from there.

#### Speqpeq7úwll (Saskatoon)

- popular and widely used berry
- stems used for making arrows



#### Retold by Ida William

(Sím'pcwemc, 1912–2000)

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