

Éy St'élmexw St'elt'ílém
Good Medicine Songs



Halq'eméylem/English
Song & Story Book

Student Guide

XÁ:LPEYELPH - CEDAR TREES

The late Bertha Peters from Sq'ewqel (Seabird Island) shared this story of the distant past (sxwōxwiyám) about a man whose name was Xpá:y. He was a very generous man (xwe'eywelh swíyeqe) who was always giving and always helping people. They say that when he passed away, he was transformed into the cedar tree (Xpá:yelhp).

The Stó:lō believe that the “Shxwelí,” the “Life-Spirit” of Xpá:y, the man who was transformed into the cedar tree (Xpá:yelhp) is in all the cedar trees (Xá:lpeyelph). Because he was such a generous man, that's why we get all the different things from Xá:lpeyelph, the cedar trees. We say to the cedar trees “Thank you for everything” (Ts'ithóle te mekw'stám). We thank them for good medicine (éy st'élmexw). The cedar has been used for making canoes (Sléxwelh), longhouses (S'í:ltexw), cradles (P'ó:th'es), and so many other things.

Cedar bark and wood are also used for making clothes (s'ith'em), hats (yó:seqw), baskets (sá:letel), mats (slhqw'á:y) and rope (stélwél). Cedar boughs (Xpá:ytses) are used in many ceremonies as medicine for cleansing or clearing a path.

It is a practice of Stó:lō people to visit with the cedar trees (Xá:lpeyelph) to pay respect to the Shxwelí of Xpá:y by making offerings such as tobacco or salmon. They say, “Shxwówelches” to cedar trees which means “We raise our hands” in gratitude and respect.

The Stó:lō people consider Xá:lpeyelph (cedar trees) as their relatives. This is an important distinction that needs to be considered when making use of cedar trees for different purposes. We must ensure they are used sustainably, respecting the teachings of generosity, and must be protected so they can continue to benefit people across generations to come.





O sí:yá:m Xá:lpeyelhp
O sí:yá:m Xá:lpeyelhp
Ts'ithole te mekw'stám
O Xá:lpeyelhp
O Xá:lpeyelhp

Thank you cedar trees
Thank you cedar trees
Thank you for everything
Oh cedar trees
Oh cedar trees

Ey st'élmexw kw'as hóy
Ey st'élmexw kw'as hóy
Good medecine thank you
Good medecine thank you

Chant

Sléxwelh kw'as hóy
Sléxwelh kw'as hóy
Canoe thank you
Canoe thank you

Chant

S'í:ltexw kw'as hóy
S'í:ltexw kw'as hóy
Longhouse thank you
Longhouse thank you

Chant

P'ó:th'es kw'as hóy
P'ó:th'es kw'as hóy
Cradle thank you
Cradle thank you

Chant

Shxwóxwelches
Shxwóxwelches
We raise our hands
Shxwóxwelches
Shxwóxwelches
We raise our hands
We raise our hands

Shxwóxwelches
Shxwóxwelches
We raise our hands
Shxwóxwelches
Shxwóxwelches
We raise our hands
We raise our hands

Oh cedar trees
Oh cedar trees

O Xá:lpeyelhp
O Xá:lpeyelhp
O Xá:lpeyelhp

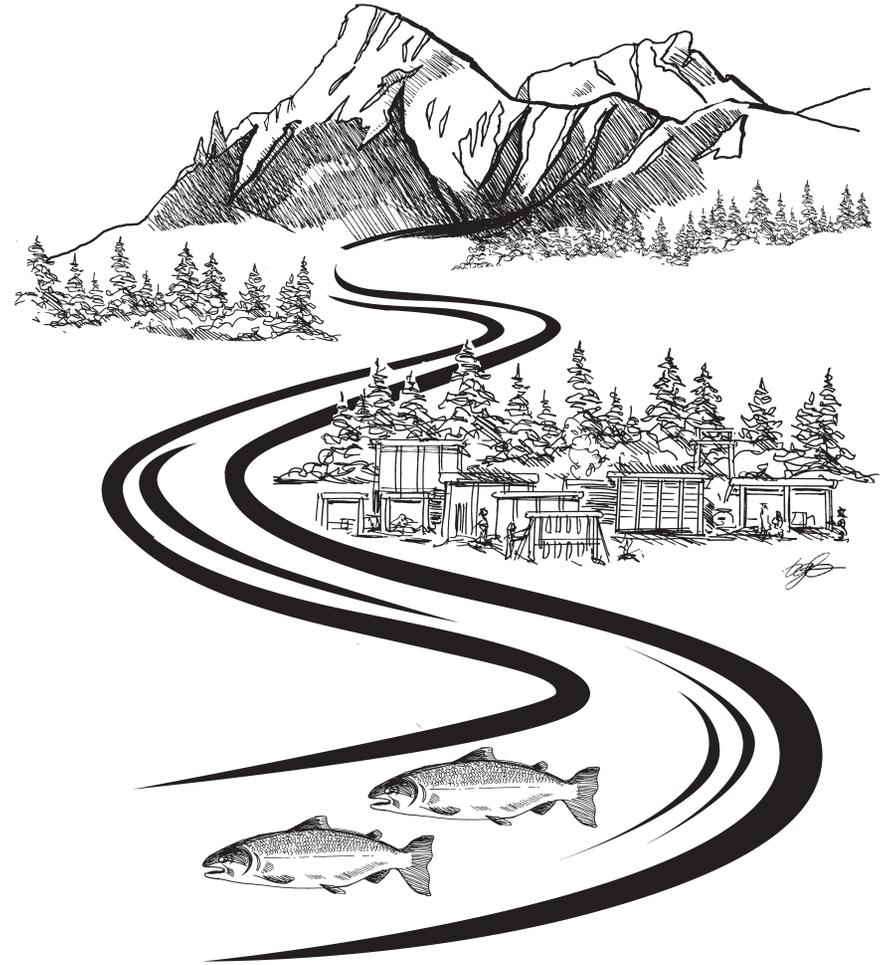
LHÍLHEQEY - FROM WHERE THE WATERS SPRING

Lhílheqey (Mt Cheam) is a lady (slhá:lí) and Kwelshánexw (Mount Baker) is a man (swíyeqe). Kwelshánexw came over to look for a wife (stó:les). He found that Mount Cheam (Lhílheqey) is a nice-looking girl (iyómex q'á:mi) so he took her over to his country. There they had three sons: Mount Hood, Mount Shasta and Mount Shuksan. After the sons grew up, she had three daughters, and said, "I had better go home to my people on the Stó:lō". (the Fraser River). So she came back and said, "I will stand guard for the Stó:lō, so that no harm comes to my people and no harm comes to the salmon that comes to feed them".

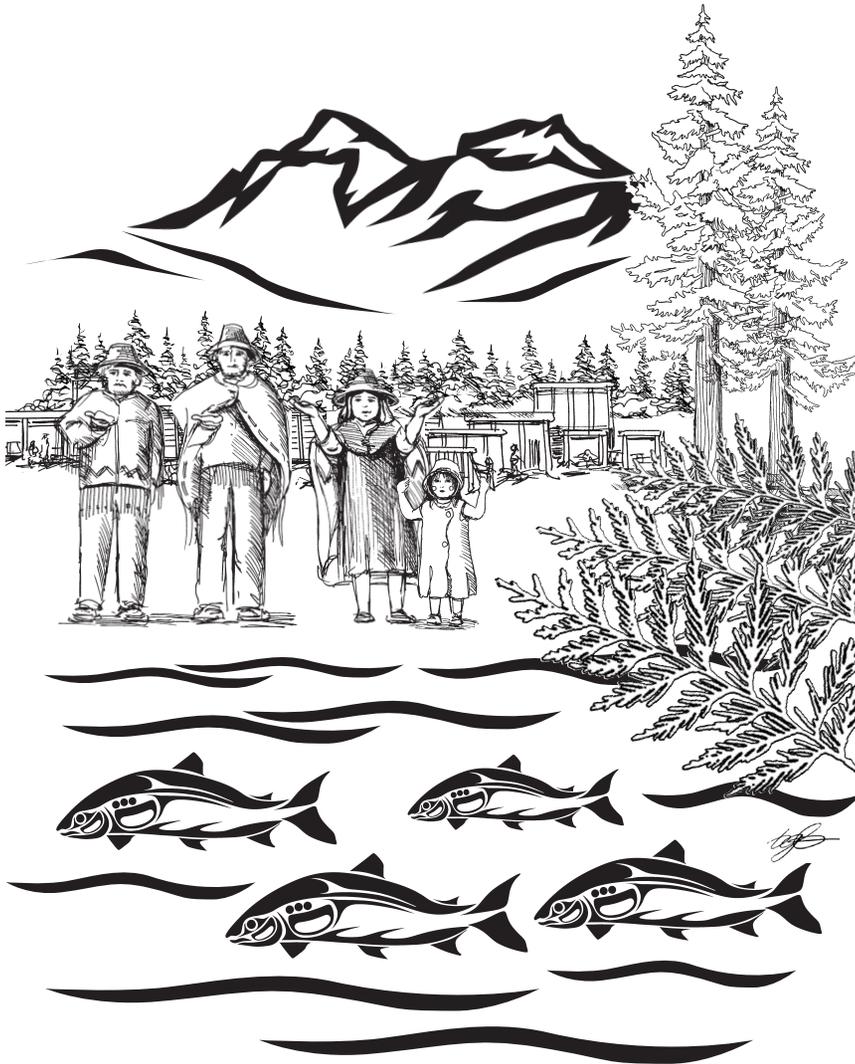
And then she took the three daughters up there. Amy Cooper mentioned the dog (sqwemá:y) followed her, and she tried to send the dog back to Kwelshánexw, but the dog stayed with her. The dog was transformed into the dog mountain (Sqwemá:y smá:lt) that is visible just behind Lhílheqey who was transformed into what is now known as Mt Cheam. Lhílheqey in English means "From Where the Waters Spring."

The song Lhílheqey acknowledges the Stó:lō belief that "Shxweli - Life Spirit" of Lhílheqey is still awake, watching over and caring for the river (xólhmet ye Stó:lō), caring for the salmon (xólhmet ye Sth'óqwí) and caring for the people (xólhmet ye mestiyexw). Lhílheqey reminds us that we too must be "always awake - "shxwexwí wiyóthe" - to care for the salmon (Sth'óqwí) the river (Stó:lō), and the people (mestiyexw). This is a way of life for the Stó:lō, and cultivates a strong connection to the land, the water, the salmon and the ancestors (syewá:lelh). If we properly care for the salmon and the river and the people now, (tlóqá:ys) then future generations will benefit. This story shows why the Stó:lō refers to Lhílheqey as the Mother Mountain (Smá:lt the Tá:l).

Amy Cooper, February 8, 1962



LHÍLHEQEY - FROM WHERE THE WATERS SPRING



Lhílheqey shxwexwí wiyóthe
Lhílheqey always awake
Lhílheqey shxwexwí wiyóthe
Lhílheqey always awake

Lhílheqey xólhmet ye stó:lō
Lhílheqey xólhmet ye sth'óqwi
Lhílheqey xólhmet mestíyexw

Caring for the river
Caring for the salmon
Caring for the people

Lhílheqey... Lhílheqey

From where the waters spring
Way up high on the mountain

Way up high on the mountain
Woaahhhh... Woaahhhh... Woaahhhh

Lhílheqey shxwexwí wiyóthe
Lhílheqey always awake
Lhílheqey shxwexwí wiyóthe
Lhílheqey always awake

Lhílheqey xólhmet ye stó:lō
Lhílheqey xólhmet ye sth'óqwi
Lhílheqey xólhmet mestíyexw

Caring for the river
Caring for the salmon
Caring for the people

Lhílheqey... Lhílheqey

From where the waters spring
Way up high on the mountain
Way up high on the mountain

Woaahhhh... .Woaahhhh... Woaahhhh

Lhílheqey
Lhílheqey
Lhílheqey
Lhílheqey

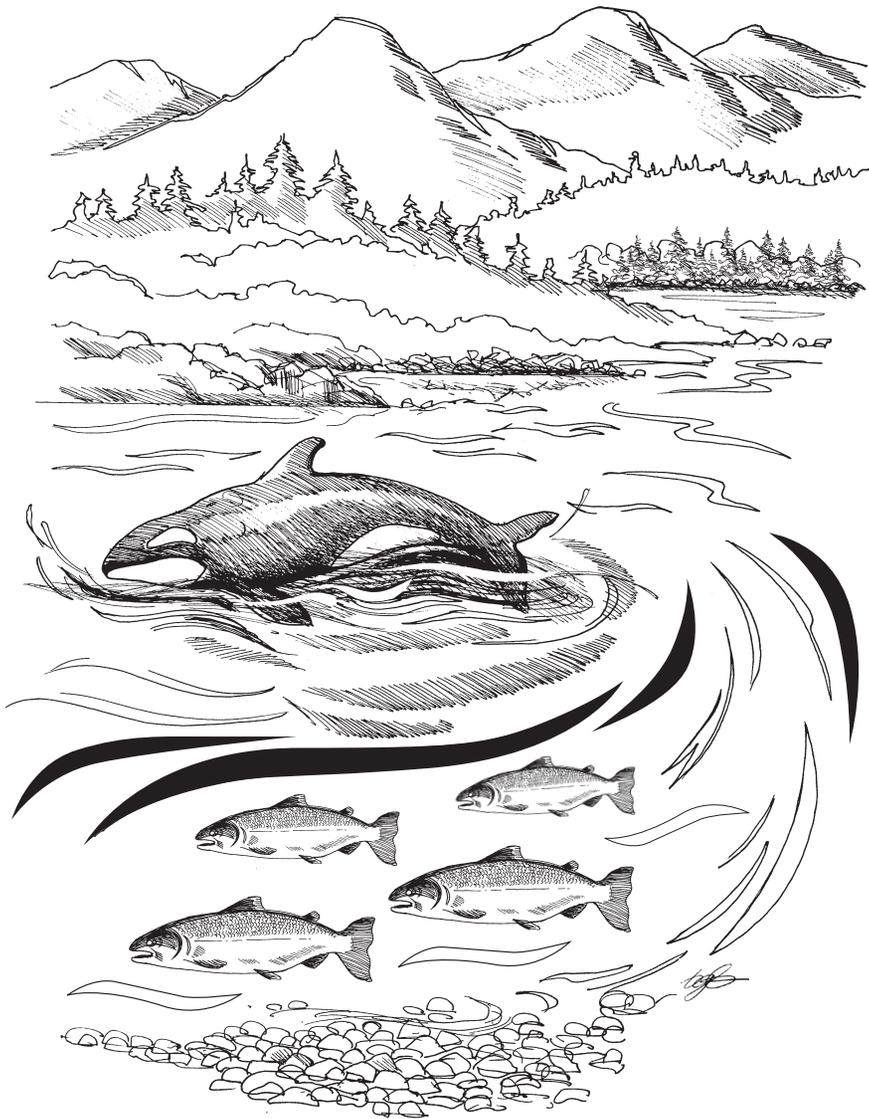
SHXWELÍ - LIFE SPIRIT

Shxweli is a word in Halq'eméylem that carries great significance to the spiritual connections Stó:lō (People of the River) have with Great Mystery or Creator. Some Stó:lō refer to Creator as Chíchelh Siyá:m. Our elder Siyamiyateliyót (Elizabeth Phillips) refers to "Creator" as "The Xá Xá Shxweli – Sacred Life Spirit." During "Sxwōxwiyám," the distant past when the world was chaotic, XeXá:ls came into this world to make things right. XeXá:ls traveled through this territory and made many transformations to teach people to learn to live in a good way. Those who were generous and doing good were transformed into what we now call our natural resources, like cedar, salmon and mountains. Those who were not living the right way were transformed into stone as lessons for future generations. For example, there were three Siyá:ms who were given the knowledge and skills to write in Halq'eméylem and were instructed to share this with the people. Since they kept this to themselves, XeXá:ls transformed the three Siyá:ms into the stone "Xá:ytem." For the Stó:lō, the shxweli of the three Siyá:ms are still in the Xá:ytem stone now situated just outside of Mission, BC.

Our Elders were asked the meaning of Shxweli and they explained that Shxweli is in us, in our parents, our great, great grandparents, going back seven generations. The Halq'eméylem word "tómíyeqw" means seven generations back and seven generations forward. The current generation is at the centre and are taught to honour what they inherited in their lineages that goes back seven generations, and to be good ancestors to the next seven generations as we are connected to them through our Shxweli. Our elders further explained that "Shxweli" is also in the river (stó:lō), the salmon (sth'óqwí), the mountains (smámelet), the ocean (kw'ótl'kwa), in the sacred roots (xa xa kwémléxw) of trees and plants, and in everyone and everything. What is unique about the Stó:lō is that the "Shxweli" of their ancestors is in the landscape of their homeland.

The song **Shxweli** expresses gratitude and reverence for the Great Sacred Life Spirit – the Siyá:m Xá Xá Shxweli, and the sacred connection we have with everyone and everything. With this understanding, we sing the song **Shxweli** with one mind, one heart – Let'sé mót, Let'sé Th'ále. Enjoy!





CHORUS

Shxweli... shxweli
Shxweli... life spirit
Shxweli... shxweli
Shxweli... life spirit

Slilikwee... slilikwee
Harmony... harmony

Toteló:mot... toteló:mot
Understanding... understanding

Lets'emót... lets'eth'ále
Lets'emót... lets'eth'ále
One mind... one heart
One mind... one heart

Shxweli... ts'ithómetset
Life spirit... we thank you

CHORUS

Stó:lō shxweli... river life spirit
Sth'óqwi shxweli
Salmon life spirit
Shxweli... shxweli

Kw'ótl'kwa shxweli
Ocean life spirit
Qwélés shxweli
Whale life spirit
Shxweli... shxweli

Smámelet shxweli
Mountain life spirit
Xa xa kwémléxw shxweli
Sacred root life spirit

Shxweli... shxweli

CHORUS

Shxweli... ts'ithómetset
Life spirit... we thank you
Shxweli... ts'ithómetset
Life spirit... we thank you

Shxweli... shxweli
Shxweli... shxweli

TEM XA XA STH'ÓQWÍ - SACRED SALMON TIME

In the Stó:lō territory of the upriver Halq'eméylem-speaking people, there are teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation regarding the salmon runs. Through the winter months, all the families would pass down life lessons and teachings of the land. At the end of winter, when the snow melts and the warmer weather arrives, the people are to watch for the xaxt'ó:les (*Easter lily*). Once it blooms, p'ápe'q'em (*to bloom*) then it is known as "tem swíwe" (*eulachon time*), when the fishermen would go to the stó:lō (*river*) and wait for the swíwe (*eulachon*). The people then would have a feast and started to preserve the swíwe (*eulachon*), also known as the candle fish.

The Stó:lō (*people of the river*) would use the dried swíwe (*eulachon*) as torches for when it was dark through the long winter nights. The Stó:lō would also bury them to extract oil, then use the oil for cooking. Tem swíwe (*eulachon time*) is short so the Stó:lō would try to get enough for the year, because once the first xeléqt te shxwexwós (*eyes of the thunder are opening or thunderstorm*) comes, it is known that the swíwe (*eulachon*) are gone out of the stó:lō (*river*). At that time, the Stó:lō would finish with the preservation of the swíwe (*eulachon*). Shortly after this, the Stó:lō would notice that the pípxwem (*cotton*) from the chewó:lhp (*cottonwood*) are starting to fall. When they see the pípxwem (*cotton*) falling, it looks like it's snowing and they know that the tl'elxxel (*spring salmon*) are in the stó:lō (*river*).

During this time, it is known as "Tem tl'elxxel" (*spring salmon time*). Another feast is held with the whole community to honor the first salmon, and all the Stó:lō would eat together, bringing the bones back to the river, and plan the fishing trips. After the feast all the families work together to "hílexw stexw" (*get the nets ready*) because it will be a long trip up to the canyon to prepare for "Tem sth'eqí" (*sockeye time*). Once the nets are ready and the Stó:lō made it up the canyon, they would build their dry racks to hang the sth'eqí (*sockeye*) to wind dry them. This would preserve the sth'eqí (*sockeye*) for the winter. In Halq'eméylem, wind dried salmon translates to *shits'es*.

These are some of the teachings passed down from the ancestors and shared among the Stó:lō (*people of the river*). If we respect "the xa xa tém:éxw" (*sacred land*) and the stó:lō (*river*), Mother Earth (*Tém:éxw the Tá:l*) will continue to take care of her children.

These are the teachings that have been shared with me by my grandmother Síyamiyateliyót, (Elizabeth Phillips), Síset'l'a, (Vivian Williams), and my late grandfather Síyameltset, (Albert Phillips).

Story told by Xótxwes, Jonathan Williams.



TEM XA XA STH'ÓQWÍ - SACRED SALMON TIME

Oh oh oh oh... Oh oh oh oh
Oh oh oh oh... Oh oh oh oh
Oh oh oh oh... Oh oh oh oh

P'ap'eq'em... tem swíwe
P'ap'eq'em... tem swíwe
Easter lilies blooming... oolichan time

Xéleq't te shxwexwó:s... eyes of thunder opening
Xéleq't te shxwexwó:s... eyes of thunder opening
Xéleq't te shxwexwó:s... oh oh oh

Oh oh oh oh... oh oh oh oh
Oh oh oh oh... oh oh oh oh
Oh oh oh oh... oh oh oh oh

Pípe~~x~~wem... tem tl'él~~x~~xel
Pípe~~x~~wem... tem tl'él~~x~~xel
Cottonwood is snowing... Spring salmon time
Tem tl'él~~x~~xel... Spring salmon time

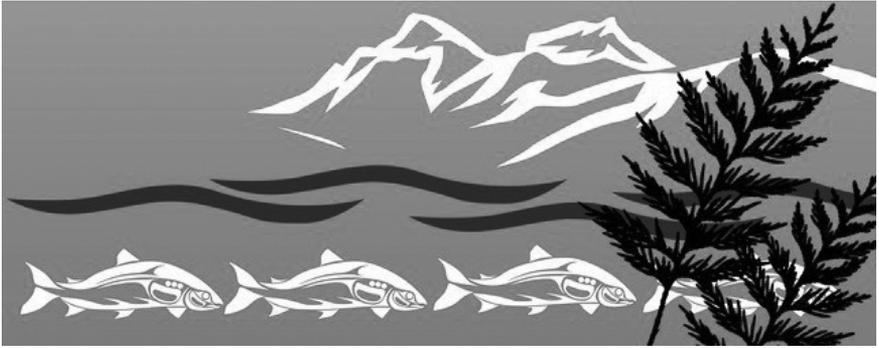
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh

Hílekw stexw... sthéqi emí
Hílekw stexw... sthéqi emí
Get your nets ready... sockeye are coming
Sthéqi emi... sockeye are coming

Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh

Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh
Oh oh oh... oh oh oh





Ey st'élmexw St'elt'ilém • Good Medicine Songs **Halq'eméylem/English Song & Story Project**

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