

The Marbled Murrelet and the Redwood Story

Told by James Gensaw ([Link to Yurok Language Department Youtube](#))

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Rek-woy 'e-see Saahl 'e-see Sto-wen 'ne-mew

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Today I'm going to be telling a story about chey-ke-nee ch'ue-ch'eesh and the keehl.
The redwood. The marbled murrelet and redwood story.

Noohl hee-kon, kue chey-ke-nee ch'ue'-ch'eesh keech 'o tmoh-ke-lee' we-'noh

'e-see 'we-too'-meyr nue-mee per-werh 'o soo-lee'm, 'e-see kue 'we-too'-meyr 'o
gem, "mos nue-mee per-werh hoo-le'moh, nue-mee per-werh 'o le'-moh
'ohl-kue-mee ne-kah kee-tee 'oo-lek-wehl 'o ke'l"

So long time ago there was this little bird and he broke his wing and he couldn't fly down south for the winter time. And all his family, they said we are not going to go down south, we're going to stay with you. We're not going to let you be lonely. We will stay here and stay with you. So as the seasons started changing, and started getting colder and rainier and everything, he was looking around, he was looking around. He saw all these elders and he saw all these children, all these other little birds, his family and friends. They were starting to shiver and be cold. He felt kind of sad so he says "Hey!" he's all...

Gho' nue le'-mow, " he said, "cho' nue le'-mow' Per-werh."

He said "why don't you guys go down south?" they said "oh, are you sure?" He said "yeah I'll be fine", he's all "I'll find a place to stay. I'll be fine."

So they go, they leave, they go down south. He started walking through the woods and he came across this Puue-no-maap'

Kue puue-no-maap' 'o kue nue-mee noo-rew kue muen-chey 'we-cheee-shep."

He goes across and sees this beautiful, beautiful dogwood tree and it had all these beautiful white flowers everywhere. So he walks over to that tree and says

“aiy-ye-kwee , puue-no-maap’! Keech ‘o tmoh-ke-lee ‘ne-we-‘noh. Mos kee soo-lek’ ‘o per werh. Kos ‘ela-son kee nek ‘o kee ‘oo-le-nek’ ‘o k’e -weys-kwen ‘o kue kee-puen”

He says “I broke my wing”, and he says “I can’t fly down south for the winter”, “Can a guy stay in your branches?” And that tree looked at him and he says

“Nue soo-to’s! Nue soo-to’s! Chee-nah! Ke’l kee-mer-lue-wey-em’! Cho’ nee-ne-wo-pen’ nek, nek ‘okw ‘o nue-mee noo-rew kue muen-chey ‘we-cheeee-shep.” And he says, “Go on! Get out of here! You’re bothering me”. He says “Look at you you’re so ugly. He says, he says, “look at me I’ve got all these beautiful white flowers”. He says “I don’t want you to stay in my branches for the winter”.

So that bird, he was sad. He starts walking through the woods and he sees this ho’-mo-no’, he sees this tan oak acorn tree. That was her first time ever producing acorns. So, she was producing these acorns, and they were falling down to the ground. And she was using her branches and she was sweeping them up into piles, she was real busy. And the little bird says

“Aiy-ye-kwee ho’-mo-no’! Cho’ ner-gery-ker-pa’ ‘e-see wa’-s’oks-see pa’, ‘ohl-kue-mee keech tmoh-ke-lee’ ‘ne-we-‘noh. Kos ‘ela-son kee ‘ne-‘oo-len-ek ‘o k’e-weys-kwen ‘o kee puen”

He says “can I stay in your branches for the winter time, I broke my wing” he says “can you help me?” “Can you have mercy on me”? and that ho’mo-ho’ says

“Nue soo-to’s! Chee-kol’ ‘ne-serrhl-er-perk’ we’y-k’oh. Tey-noh ‘ne-serrhl-er-perk’. Mos kee ner-gery-ker-chek”

And so he says, so that tan oak tree told him “go on, get out of here!” “Can’t you see I’m so busy, I have all this work to do around here”. He says “I don’t have time to help you, I can’t help you, go on!”

So by this time that bird was really sad, he put head down and started crying, he started crying. And he started walking into the woods, the farther into the woods he walked the darker it became, the farther in the woods he went the darker it became. Pretty soon he went BAM! And he ran into what he thought was a giant wall. By the time his eyes started adjusting to the darkness and from being blurry from all the tears, he realized that he didn’t run into a giant wall, he actually ran into the giant redwood tree. This little bird, not very big. He starts looking up at that big redwood tree. He says. He starts trembling. He says

“Aaah aiy-ye-kwee keehl. Cho’ ner-gery-ker-pa’ ‘e-see cho’ w’a-s’ok-see-pa’ ‘ohl-kue-mee nue-mee keem so-nee-ne-pe’k’ we’y-k’oh. Keech ‘o chper-werk-see-soh

kue 'o chyue 'oo le'-mo-nee'ohl-kue-mee yo'hl-koh nue-mee per-werh ho le'-mehl. Mos kee 'oo-lek-wek' 'o kee-puen.

He says "I have nowhere to stay".

Kos 'ela-son kee 'ne-'oo-len-ek' 'o k'e-weys-kwen."

He says "can I stay in your branches, you know I broke my wing, I really miss my family. Can you help me? Can you have mercy on Me?" That redwood tree says oh Pee'-wo'. Pee'-wo' 'ne rah-cheen.

He says of course. He reaches down, he picks that little bird up and puts him into his branches. And they hang out all winter, and he stays there all winter with the redwood tree.

And to this day that marbled murrelet is the only seabird that nests in redwood trees. You got your eagles and your hawks that nest in there, but he's the only seabird.

So while all that was going on the creator was watching. So he comes down. He goes over to the puue-no-maap', he goes over to the dogwood tree, and he says

"Ho neee-no-wo-chek', ke'l mos skue-yen'-ee 'oohl" .

He says I was watching you and you weren't being a very good person. Your friend, he needed your help and you were too worried about your looks and you called him ugly. You didn't want him staying in your branches. He says for that I'm going to punish you. I'm not going take away your beautiful white flowers. You can have your beautiful white flowers, but you're only going to have them for a short period of the year, then you're going to lose them. So that's why the dogwood tree only has those beautiful white flowers for about a month and a half out of the year, then they lose them

So then he goes over to the tan oak acorn tree. And he tells her "I was watching you, when your fellow neighbor needed your help, you were so busy that you couldn't take the time to help the person when they really needed your help. He said for that I'm going to make you

busy for the rest of your life. Your job is going to be creating acorns to feed all the local Native people. And so that's why we have other tan oak, we have tan oak acorns, we have black acorns. We have a lot of different acorns trees around here, that's why we eat the tan oak acorns. That's her job. She was to busy the rest of her life producing acorns to feed the people.

Then he goes over to the redwood tree and says

Ho neee'-no-wo-chek', ke'l skue-yen'-ee 'oohl. Ke'l okw' kue pey-leen k'e-chekws.

He says "I was watching you, you're a really, really good person. You're really nice, and you have such a big heart and he says for that I'm all I'm going to let you live for a long time. And oh when the Yurok people come, later when I create Yurok people, he said they're going to treat you just like a human being. And if they ever use you for their houses, or for their boats, their canoes, or the regalia trunks, or for their drums, they're going to put a heart in you. They're going to treat you just like a human and give you that heart. Because you have a big heart. That's why when we make our boats and canoes, we put a heart in there. And in our old redwood houses they used to keep a redwood stick by the fire to represent the heart of that house. Our regalia boxes and our drums, they all have hearts in them. That was the story of the marbled murrelet and the redwood tree.