



Coyote and the Rock

A Tale from the Northwestern Band of Shoshone

Cultural Note

According to Shoshone tradition, Coyote tales should only be told during the winter time.

The People of the Big Shield are a warrior society of the Shoshone tribe who are known for their big shields and fearless nature.

Beads and ornamentation on Shoshone regalia are placed, not as decoration, but as powerful objects to fend off evil and the enemy. Feathers are earned for great courage and are worn on the upper arm of the warrior. Many warriors decorate the armband with beads on which eagle feathers dangle.

Vocabulary

boulder

lunge

strutted

scurried

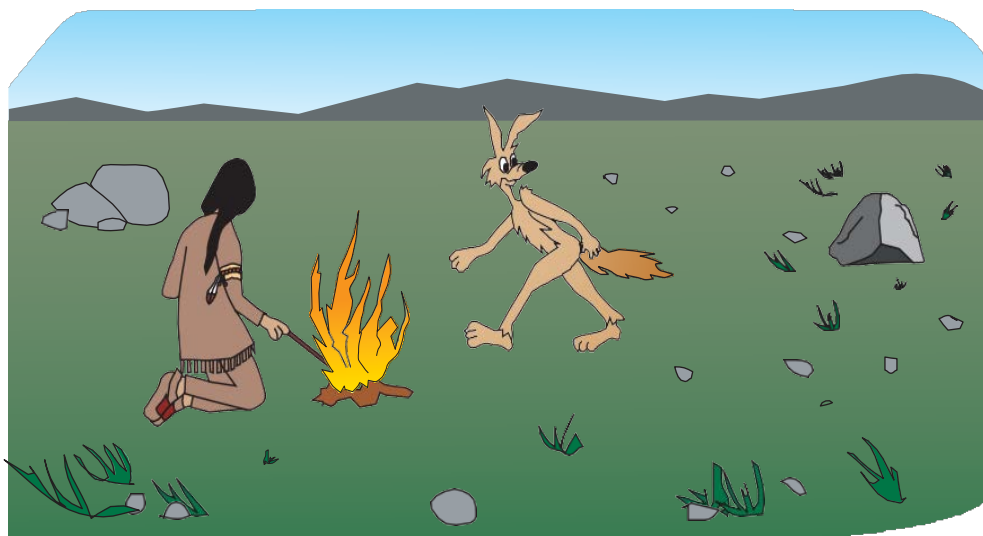
yelped

The Native American Indian Literacy Project was made possible by funds from the Utah State Office of Education (USOE). It is a joint effort of the USOE and San Juan School District Media Center. For more information about this project, contact Shirlee Silversmith at (801) 538-7838.

The booklets are available on a CD from the USOE. You may print the booklets off the CD, free of charge, for educational purposes. If you would like to purchase printed copies of the booklets, contact San Juan School District Media Center at (435) 678-1229.

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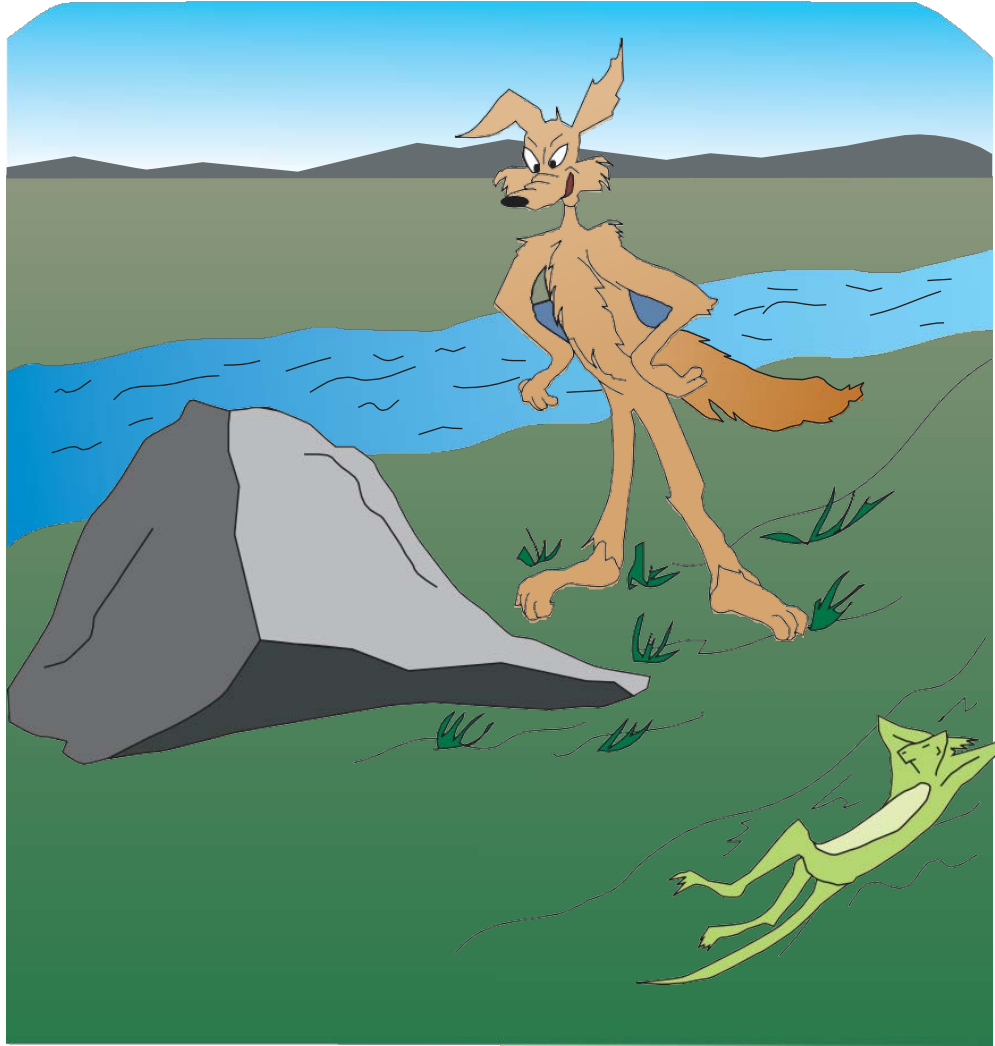
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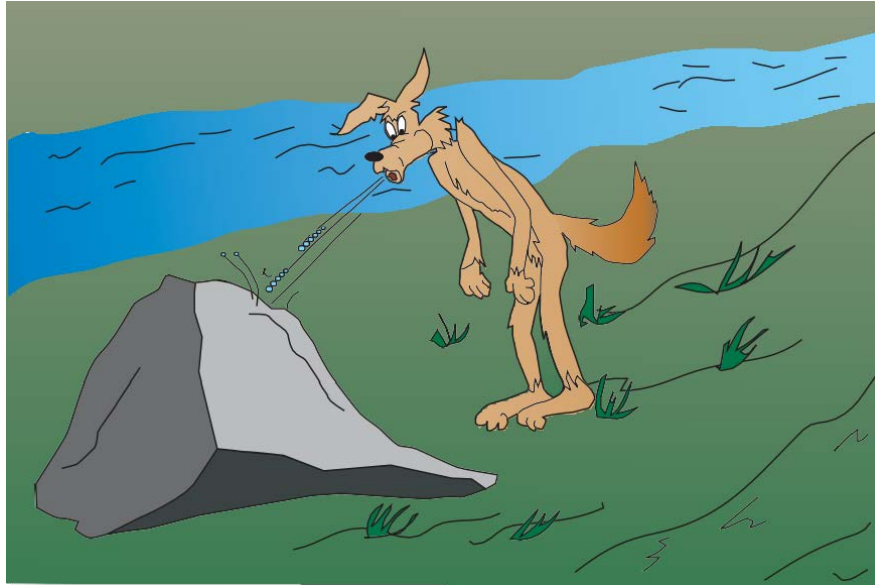
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Itsappe, Coyote, was walking along a river one day, searching high and low for something good to eat. He came upon a large rock standing in his path.

"What is this huge boulder doing right here?" he asked aloud.

Pokoitsi, Lizard, was sunning himself nearby. He answered, "Coyote, you mustn't stand too close. Don't you know about that rock? It is feared by all the creatures near and far."



Coyote walked slowly around the large rock. He was young and foolish, and he didn't think he needed to be afraid of anything.

"Nonsense," Coyote said. "Why should I be afraid of this rock?" He lunged at the rock and spat on it.

Nothing happened. The rock just sat there. "

Hmph!" said Coyote. "It's just as I said. There is nothing to fear from this rock!"

Lizard heard what Coyote said and scurried away, but Coyote just turned on his heel and strutted off.

After he had walked a short distance, however, Coyote heard an enormous pounding sound coming from behind him. He looked back up the river from where he had come. He saw the large rock rolling toward him! "It's not possible!" yelled Coyote, and he began to run as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him.

First, he ran up a steep hill. He turned his head to look behind him as the rock came to a stop at the bottom of the hill. Coyote laughed aloud and yelled back at the rock, "Just like I said, you can't catch me, you big heavy rock! Rolling downhill is easy, but you'll never make it up this hill!"

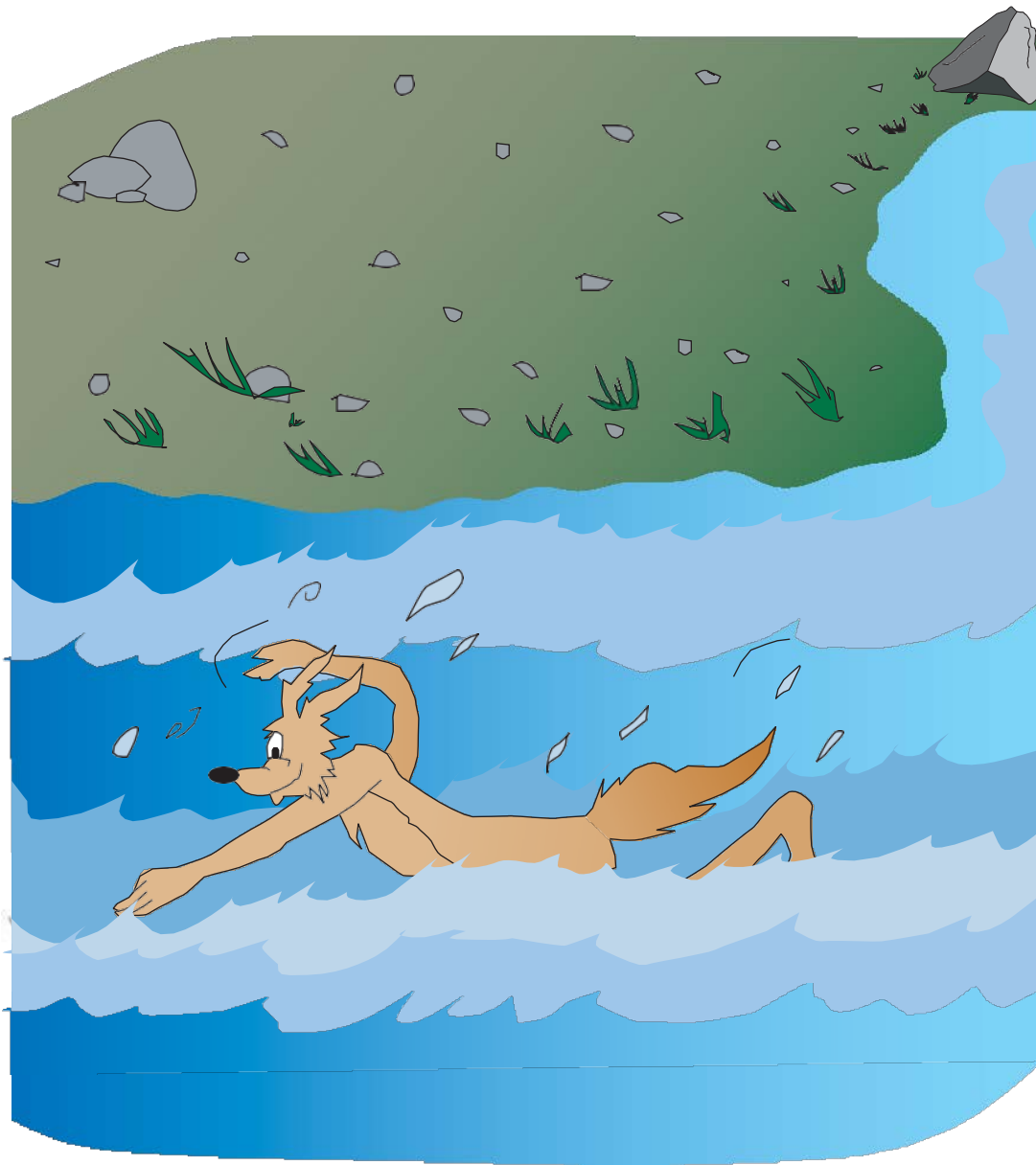
He gasped when the rock began to roll up the hill towards him, and he began to run again, as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him.





Coyote ran through a narrow gorge. "Aha! You can't catch me here, you big wide rock!" Coyote foolishly believed that the rock would not fit through the narrow passage. But the rock pounded through the gorge. It crushed the rocks in its path. It scraped the sides of the gorge and continued rolling after Coyote. Coyote scrambled out the other side and ran as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him.

Coyote crossed a stream. The rock plunged in and followed. Coyote scurried through a thicket of brush oak. "Surely the leaves and branches will hide me," he said. But the rock pounded a path straight for Coyote, knocking down all the trees. Coyote did not know what to do!

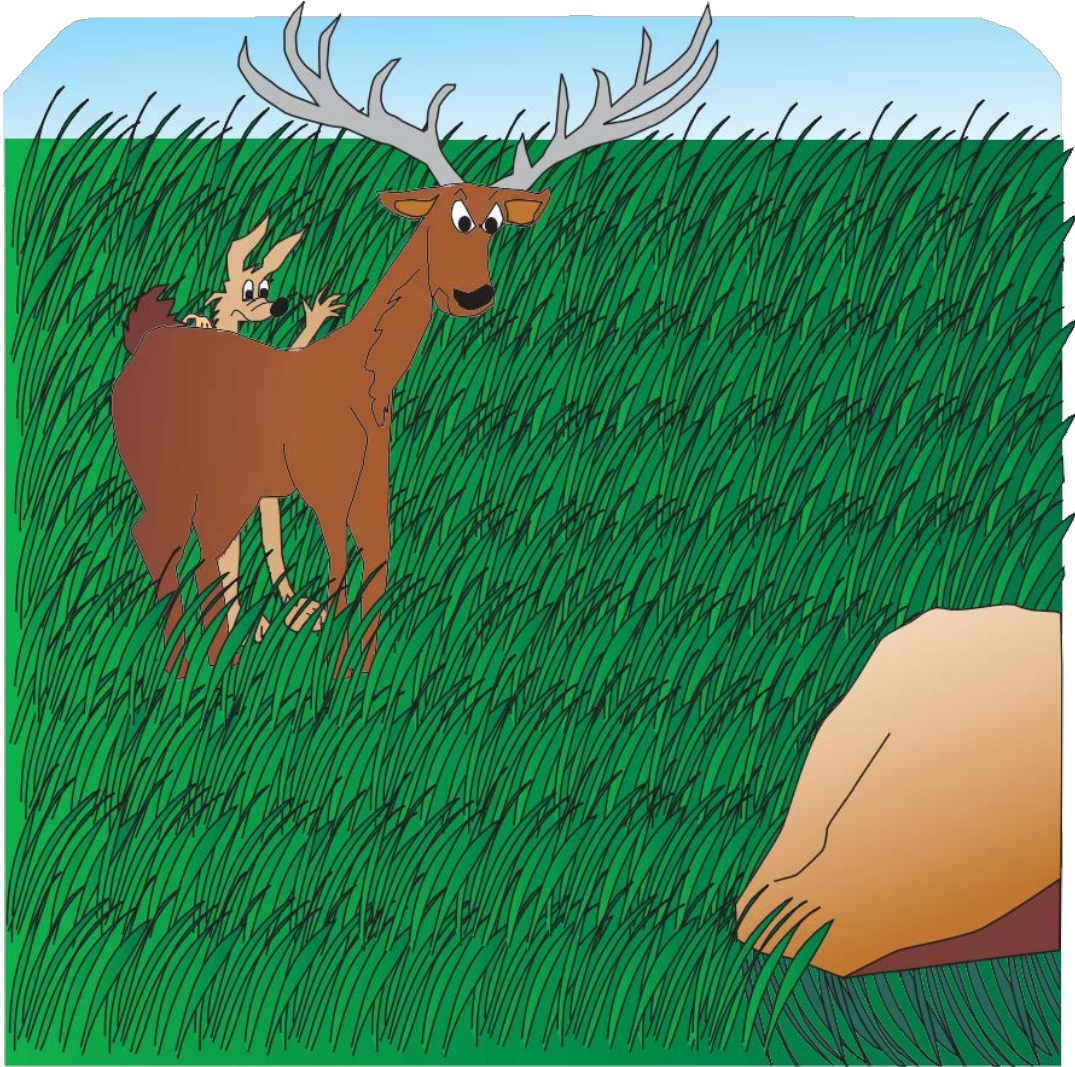


Coyote looked around frantically. Across a small ravine, he saw Bear digging for food. He ran to Bear as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him.

"Bear, please save me!"

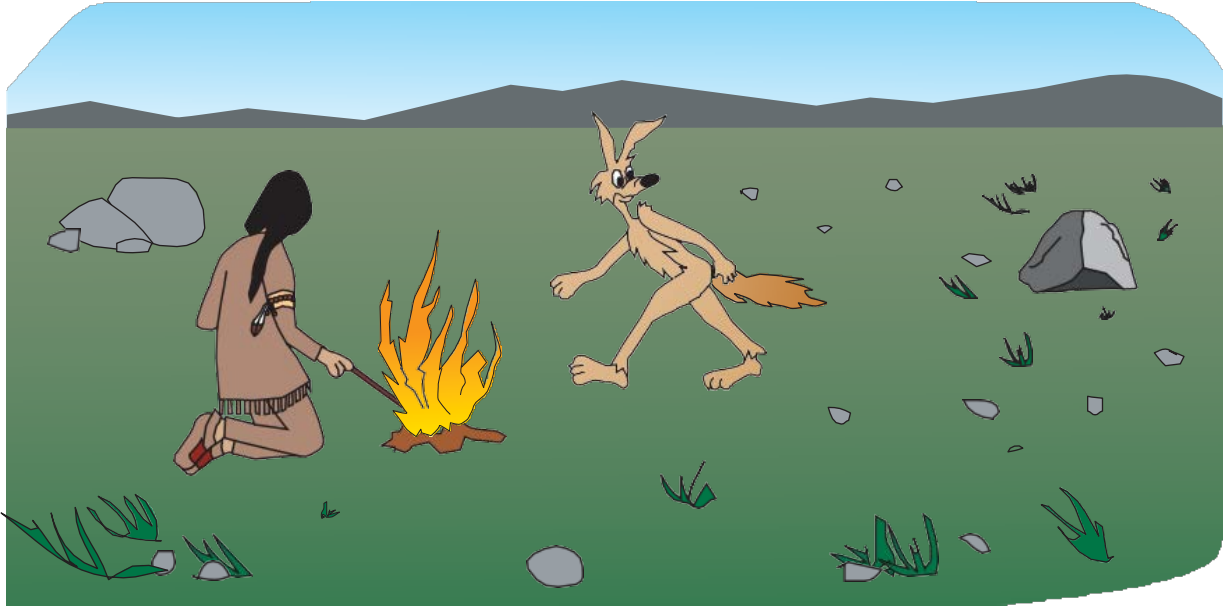
Bear looked up and heard the crashing sound of the rock coming. "Here, get behind me," she said. She stepped between Coyote and the rock. She stood on her hind legs and raised her paws, but she could not stop the rock. It rolled right over her, packing her into the soft ground. Then the rock continued chasing after Coyote once again.





Coyote gasped. He ran until he came to Elk, who was grazing in a green meadow. "Elk, please save me from this terrible rock!" he pleaded.

Elk looked up and heard the crashing sound of the rock coming. "Here, get behind me," he said. He stepped between Coyote and the rock. He raised his antlers against the rock, but he could not stop it. It rolled right over him, crushing his mighty antlers. The rock continued chasing after Coyote once again.



Breathless, Coyote looked around. He saw a man on a ridge, building a fire. He scrambled up the ridge as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him. Coyote recognized the man as one of the People of the Big Shield. "Please, Brother, this rock will kill me! Save me!" The man did not look up. Coyote pleaded again. "Please, Brother, I cannot run any more!"

The man stood up and gently stroked the large beads and eagle feather hanging from a leather band wrapped on his arm. Coyote threw himself to the ground. He huddled up into a tight ball, his paws wrapped around his knees.

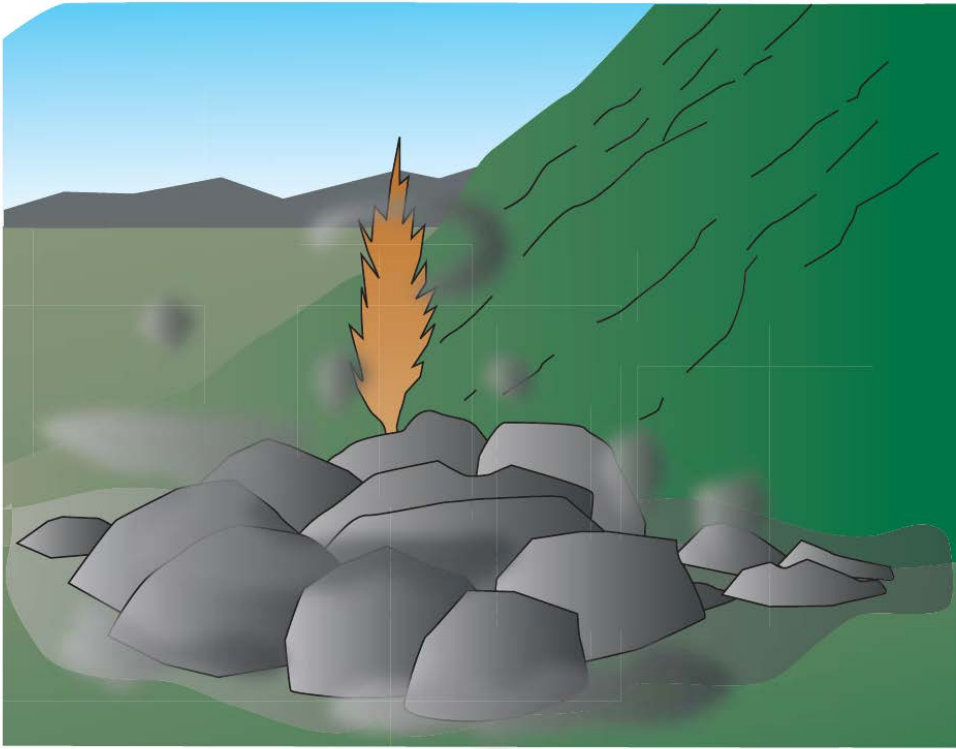
The man heard the rock crashing through the brush. He stroked the large beads and looked up just in time to brace himself as the rock approached. He calmly pushed the rock with his elbow. The rock shattered, and the pieces went flying left and right.

Coyote rose from the ground, astonished at the man's power. "How did you do that?" Coyote asked.

The man folded his arms across his chest. He held the charm and the beads hanging from his neck and said, "These beads are powerful."

Exhausted, Coyote slept all day. During the night, he woke up and found the man asleep. Coyote crept towards him. He stole the beads from the man and scurried away into the darkness.





Coyote ran as fast as his scrawny legs could carry him.

He came to an overhanging rock and crawled into the space beneath it. He stroked the beads now dangling from his chest. "Ha! I will never run from anything again! Not ever!"

Suddenly, the earth moved. The ground trembled beneath him, and rocks tumbled from the ledge above him. Coyote stood up, fearless, holding the beads he believed would protect him. He held out his arm to brace himself against the rockslide, but the rockslide fell on top of him, holding him fast. Only his tail stuck out beneath the rubble.

Foolish Coyote!

Glossary

itsappe - coyote

okwaiten - river

pokoitsi - lizard

tempin - rock

tsoon - beads

Reading Suggestions

- This story is similar to "Coyote and the Rolling Stone," a Goshute tale. Have you read it? Did you know there are six major tribes in Utah? Altogether in this project there are 30 books. Are you reading these books at school as well as at home?
- Try beading a necklace. You could use beads or colored macaroni or Froot Loops cereal. Make a nice pattern as you string your necklace.
- Retell the story in your own words. You may want to record yourself, then listen to see how you like your story.

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