

An Aboriginal Water Story

The following traditional story is from the Mi'kmaq (Micmac) and Maliseet First Nations of Nova Scotia.

Once there was a great drought. The rain stopped falling and the earth became dry. Finally the streams stopped flowing. There was a village by the side of the stream. A villager was sent upstream to find out why the stream had stopped flowing. Before long, the man came back. "There is a dam across the stream," he said. "It is holding back all the water. There are guards on the dam. They say their Chief is keeping all the water for himself."



"Go and beg him for water," said the Elders of the village. "Tell him we are dying without water to drink." So the villager went back again. When he returned, he held a bark cup filled with muddy water. "This is all the water their Chief will allow us to have," he said.

They were not sure what to do. Then one of the old Chiefs spoke. "We must pray to Gitchee Manitou," he said. "Perhaps he will pity us and send help." Then they burned tobacco and sent their prayers up to the Creator. Their prayers were answered when Gitchee Manitou sent his friend Koluscap down to the village. Koluscap took the shape of a tall warrior who used a tall pine tree for a club. He struck the dam with his club. The dam burst, releasing all the water. Once again, water flowed down the stream and into the village. Some of the villagers were so happy they jumped into the stream and dove so deep that they became water creatures, replacing those that had dried up and died when the dam was built. They still live in that stream today, sharing the water that no one person can ever own.

(Adapted from "Koluscap and the Water Monster" from *Keepers of the Earth*)

LINKING TO LITERACY

Text Genre: Legends

Legends are traditional cultural stories that have been passed on from one generation to the next for many years. Legends were originally created to explain natural phenomena or things that people believe. Many legends tell how characters overcame challenges and performed extraordinary deeds.

- 1 Which features of a legend does this story have?
- 2 What is one "cause" and one "effect" in this legend?
- 3 Create a story map of the events in the legend.