

Teacher's Guide and Introduction to:

The Blue Heron Who Stayed for the Winter

as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson



*Mary Louise Defender Wilson on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, North Dakota.
(Troyd Geist, North Dakota Council on the Arts © 2009)*

**Developed by Susan Eleuterio with assistance from Linda Ehreth and Troyd Geist;
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Introduction

This teacher's guide is designed to accompany the story, "The Blue Heron Who Stayed for the Winter" from the CD *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakotah Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson*. Produced by Makoché Word and the North Dakota Council on the Arts, this CD will introduce your students to the stories, legends, culture and language of Mary Louise Defender Wilson and the Dakotah tribe. Mary Louise Defender Wilson's wisdom, artistry, and serene dignified presence have earned her the nation's highest honor for a traditional artist, a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She also has received multiple Native American Music Awards for Best Spoken Word Recording, the National Education Association's H. Council Trenholm Memorial Award for Human and Civil Rights and a Notable Document Award from the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association (Makoché Word/North Dakota Council on the Arts: 2001. <http://www.makoche.com>)

Overview

"Mary Louise Defender Wilson, also known as *Gourd Woman*, is a Dakotah elder and traditionalist born into a family of storytellers on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation of North Dakota. The first story she remembers hearing at age three was told by her mother, Helen Margaret See the Bear, and grandmother, both of who were midwives*. These stories were told to educate both children and adults and were told whether working, relaxing or as part of a ceremony. While traveling in horse-drawn wagons to visit expectant mothers, Helen Margaret would tell stories to her daughter about the plants, birds, and animals they saw along the way. By the age of eleven, Mary Louise was fluent in the Dakotah language and telling stories herself. For decades since, Mary Louise has been telling these stories to following generations so they might live 'in a good way.'" (Troyd Geist, from *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakotah Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson*, Makoché Word/North Dakota Council on the Arts: 2001. www.makoché.com)

***Midwives-** in the past in America, when many communities did not have doctors nearby, there were women known as "midwives" who helped mothers when they were giving birth to babies. Today some nurses are known as "nurse midwives" and they carry on this tradition.

Note to Teachers:

Lesson 1 should be used before listening to the story, Lessons 2 and 3 are designed to be used when students listen to the story, and Lesson 4 is designed to be used after the story has been shared with students.

(Please note: Your public library should have a copy of the enhanced CD, *My Relatives Say : Traditional Dakotah Stories As Told By Mary Louise Defender Wilson* which can be used or a copy can be ordered. See resources below.)

Grade Level Focus: K-6th Grades



Blue Heron

Connections with North Dakota Arts Grades K-6 Standards and Benchmarks

English Language Arts Standards

Standard 1: *Students engage in the research process.*

K-6

Report on a topic orally or in written format

Benchmark 4

1.4.1 1.4.2 1.4.3 1.4.4

Understand main idea and supporting details

Use simple organizational strategies

Use appropriate reference tools

Use vocabulary knowledge to gather information

Standard 2: *Students engage in the reading process.*

K-6

Make and confirm/disconfirm predictions about what will happen in a story

Read a variety of genres; i.e., fiction, folk tales, poetry, and nonfiction-informational

Identify the elements of a fiction text; i.e., setting, characters, events, problem, resolution/solution

Benchmark 4

2.4.1 2.4.2 2.4.3 2.4.4 2.4.5 2.4.6

Use strategies for activating prior knowledge to comprehend text

Make and confirm predictions to enhance understanding

Determine a specific purpose for reading

Seek help to understand information

Use a variety of clues to determine the meaning of words

Use mental pictures to help increase understanding

Standard 3: *Students engage in the writing process.*

K-6

Identify audience and purposes for writing

Select ideas and information to persuade, entertain, or inform using a specific genre of writing; i.e., narrative, personal persuasive, traditional tale, poetry

Compose writing that contains characteristics of a selected genre of writing; i.e., memoir, factual persuasive, poetry, narrative

Discuss ideas drawn from personal experience

Communicate meaning through drawing; e.g., setting, characters

Benchmark 4

3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.3 3.4.4

Make connections between personal experiences and specific incidents in a text Understand the story elements

Make connections among works of literature

Understand the characteristics of various simple genres

Standard 4: *Students engage in speaking and listening processes.*

K-5

Actively listen to the speaker

Participate as an active listener and speaker in group discussions

Benchmark 4

6.4.1 6.4.2 6.4.3

Use voice and body to communicate

Express ideas clearly and concisely

Respond to spoken words and body language

Grade 6

6.4.1 Speak with a purpose using delivery techniques appropriate for different audiences to inform, demonstrate, entertain, or persuade

6.4.2 Use supporting materials for topic development; e.g., research, personal experience, literature, interview

Standard 5: *Students understand media*

Produce samples of different media genres to inform, entertain, advertise, or persuade; i.e., memoir, factual, persuasive, poetry, narrative

Standard 6: *Students understand and use principles of language*

Benchmark 4

7.4.1 7.4.2 7.4.3 7.4.4 7.4.5

Understand the characteristic sounds and rhythms of language

Use language for a variety of purposes
Understand basic phonological patterns in English
Understand simple figurative language
Identify specific ways in which language varies across situations

Social Studies

Standard 1: *Students apply Social Studies skills and resources.*

Standard 2: *Students understand important historical events*

4.2.4 Use chronological terms (i.e., decade, century, generation)

Identify similarities and differences between past events and current events in North Dakota (e.g., in the lives of people from different cultures past and present)

Standard 5: *Students understand and apply concepts of geography.*

Human Geography

4.5.4 Explain how the physical environment (e.g., rainfall, climate, natural hazards) affects human activity in North Dakota

Human Development and Behavior

4.6.1 Use chronological terms (i.e., decade, century, generation)

Identify similarities and differences between past events and current events in North Dakota (e.g., in the lives of people from different cultures past and present)

4.6.2 Explain the contributions of various ethnic groups (e.g., Native Americans, immigrants) to the history of North Dakota (e.g., food, traditions, languages, celebrations)



Prairie Chicken

Objectives

- 1) To introduce students to concept that Native American tribes have unique languages and customs (Lesson 1)
- 2) To help students identify language uses in their own lives (slang, regional phrases) (Lesson 1)
- 3) To help students explore weather connections between the story and where they live in North Dakota (Lesson 2)
- 4) To use storytelling to improve students reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills (Lessons, 1, 2, and 3)
- 5) To help students make comparisons between the lessons in the story and events in their own lives, especially the concept of working together to help each other and how each person has a gift or ability that others should respect and utilize to function effectively (Lesson 4)

Outcomes

- 1) Students will identify words used in the story which are from the Dakotah language (Lesson 1)
- 2) Students will demonstrate listening, reading, writing and speaking skills through verbal, written, artistic and spoken reflections on the story by creating a poem with a drawing (Lesson 2 and 3)
- 3) Students will document weather conditions faced by the blue heron and those faced by people in North Dakota-and identify places in North Dakota where blue herons can be found through mapping (Lesson 2)
- 4) Students will write a story about an event in the life of someone in their family or community (or from classroom literature), which makes connections to the issue of doing things together to help each other and how each person has a gift or ability that others should respect (Lesson 4)

Lesson 1 to be used before students listen to the story

This lesson will introduce some Dakota language to your students

Goals: Practice listening skills,
Help students to see connections between language, culture and understanding
Encourage students to learn other languages

Time Needed: 1 classroom period

Equipment Needed: Computer, projector, screen, paper and pencils

(Please note: Your public library should have a copy of the enhanced CD, *My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakota Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson* which can be used or a copy can be ordered. See resources below.)

Directions:

1) Read the following text from *Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students* to your students. For older students, have them take turns reading:

“Oral Tradition: Native Americans value the ability to speak well before audiences. Native people value leaders as much for their speech making as for their work ethic, military and economic accomplishments. A leader's ability to speak clearly helps to establish laws, negotiate differences, and maintain peace. Native people also value telling folktales and sacred myths, which contain and preserve a nation's values, worldview, history, and way of life.

Language: Many people have said that to know a people is to speak their language. Language captures the little (and big) ideas, feelings, and ways cultures see the world. In short, culture and beliefs are transmitted through language. When Europeans came into contact with Native Americans, more than 100 million Native Americans spoke more than 850 languages and had a large body of spoken literature*. Stories were part of this body of literature and were told both to children and adults to entertain and to teach Native ways of life.

When the U.S. government pulled many Native children out of their homes and placed them into English-only boarding schools, the natural transfer of cultural information from adults to children was interrupted. As a result, children lost the ability to express many essential ideas in their native language. In addition, they had difficulty expressing themselves in English, which was a second language. And when they could express themselves in English, they were often censored.

After years away in boarding school, speaking English, many young people could no longer express or fully understand Native stories or Native culture. Plus, they no longer lived near places mentioned in the stories. So it became hard for them to relate to stories that drew on parts of the landscape, like the story, *The Woman Who Turned Herself to Stone*. Mary Louise challenges these language obstacles when she tells bi-lingual stories to young people. ‘I tell

stories as a way to teach the language,' she says. 'Even if they don't literally understand what I am saying in Dakotah, they are emotionally able to understand it.'" (From *Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students* http://www.carts.org/artist_wilson3.html) *Leeming, David A. 1997. *Storytelling Encyclopedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around the World*. Arizona: Oryx.)

2) "Discuss with students how we judge people based on their language. Have students write down examples of slang they have heard (no swear words!), folk and/or ethnic expressions they've heard from their parents and/or grandparents, or computer social networking and cell phone texting abbreviations for words.

3) Ask students to write down examples of problems that might happen when someone doesn't understand someone else's language. Have students pair and share their examples, then one person from each pair should summarize the problems they listed.

4) Show students this link on You Tube:

Dakota Language Book Phrases for Children by Women You Tube Video (2minutes 40 seconds)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZsBoCPrxSA&feature=channel>

Have them practice saying some of the phrases.

If there is time, you might also show them this video:

Dakota Language Old McDonald (4 minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBQqgvkRkx0&feature=related>

5) Discuss how children learn language. Ask them to write down words they know in another language besides English, starting with food, since the first words we learn from other languages are often related to food. Make a class list or have students work in teams to make a composite list. Ask them to listen carefully when they hear Mary Louise Defender Wilson's story to see if they recognize any of the Dakotah language they saw in the video.

6) Talk about ways to solve problems when people don't understand each other's language. You might use this video as an amusing introduction to the discussion:

"Goldfish vs. Kitty"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzEjzL6_gyE



Lesson 2 and 3

Note: To be used on the days students listen to the story *The Heron Who Stayed Who Stayed for the Winter* (Track 2 on the enhanced CD)

Goals: To examine the concept of migration and weather in North Dakota
To use art to summarize the story elements

Lesson 2

Time Needed: 1 classroom period

Equipment: Computer/projector

Directions:

- 1) Tell students to close their eyes when you begin the story
- 2) Play the story
- 3) After Heron says, “Look at me, look at my long legs. I can run through snow banks” - tell students to open their eyes.

NOTE: Stop the CD when the prairie chickens have a meeting (about 10 minutes after the story begins)

- 4) Show students this map of Great Blue Herons on Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/csgreatblueheron/pool/map?mode=group>

Type in “United States” to see a map of the US with photo links. This link is a “group pool” of photos of blue herons, which includes a map where they were photographed.

Use the map to talk about migration of birds. You might want to have your class join the “group pool” and add photos of great blue herons.

- 5) Discuss that January is called “the terrible month” in the story- why call it that? Have students discuss the weather conditions the heron would encounter in North Dakota in January. What did the prairie chickens tell the blue heron about weather? You might also use this lesson from Wisconsin Weather Stories to prompt students to talk about the weather in their communities:

Weather Sayings Lesson:

<http://weatherstories.ssec.wisc.edu/sayings/sayings.html>

- 6) Before continuing the story have students select one of the following options:
 - Draw the heron
 - Draw the prairie chickens
 - Draw the plum thicket

Include the landscape in each drawing- what would it look like?

Students should pair and share their drawings in groups of four and select one to share with the class. Each group should use the drawing to discuss what’s happened so far in the story.

- 7) Migration discussion. Have students list moves they or others in their families have made. Ask students did anyone in your family move from somewhere else to North Dakota? Did anyone from your neighborhood/community move from somewhere else to where they live now? Then for homework, have them ask family members about moves they have made - for each move, list the reason they moved. Have them use google maps to make a personal migration map. If their family hasn’t moved in several generations, you can have them interview someone in the community and make a migration map for them.

Directions for making a personal migration map:

(They will need a gmail address or you can create one for the entire class and then add maps to “My Maps”)

- 1) Go to <http://maps.google.com>
- 2) Select “my maps”
- 3) Create new map
- 4) Make sure they check “unlisted”
- 5) Give the map a title (My family’s migration)
- 6) For each move, type in an address or location.
- 7) Don’t forget to save the map. Maps will be used in Lesson 4.



Lesson 3

Time Needed: 1 classroom period

Goals: making predictions based on a story
Critical thinking about outcomes
Connecting through poetry to the heron's experience

Directions:

- 1) Have students write a prediction about what is going to happen next in the story. Ask them what could they do to melt the ice for the heron? What are some signs that spring is coming they have noticed? What birds do they see coming in spring?
- 2) Play the rest of the story on the CD. Remind students that Mary Louise says, "the wren went to get spring," and she notes that the wren's song sounds like, "It is here!"
- 3) Ask students if they have heard the wren. Show them the wren on this link <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/songbird/troglody.htm> Then have them listen to the marsh wren on this site: <http://birdvoices.net/?cat=9>
- 4) Ask students if their predictions were correct. Have students write a poem about the heron using a haiku format. (Three sentences or phrases, first line has 5 syllables, second line has 7 syllables, last line has 5 syllables.) Poems will be used in Lesson 4.

Here is a sample haiku by John Tiong Chungoo

So still the heron
I pause over
All of creations*

*From: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/haiku-the-heron/>
(May be used for educational purposes only)

Lesson 4 to be used after students have listened to the story

Goals: to have students reflect on the concepts of working together through writing and reflection

To use student created maps and poetry to reflect on differences and similarities

To help students make connection between other stories and literature which address the theme of how individuals can work together to help one another

Time Needed: 1 classroom period

Equipment: computer/projector

Directions:

- 1) At the end of the story, Mary Louise says: “Blue heron is always alone - even today, but we have to know when to work together.” Ask students to write about a time you or someone in your family had a problem and someone helped you or someone in your family. How were you or they like the blue heron? Do you think the blue heron made a mistake? How were others who helped like the prairie chickens? Why is it important to help others when they have a problem?
- 2) Have students read a partner’s story and write a reflection on it.
- 3) Print out students’ maps from Lesson 2 or show them to the class on a computer/projector. Ask students to look for patterns in their migrations, are there similar routes their families followed?
- 4) Have students read their haiku poems about the heron. What similarities are in their poems? What are some differences? What gifts did the blue heron have that helped him in the spring? What problems did he have in the winter?
- 5) Have students read their reflections on their partner’s story. How does the story of “*The Blue Heron Who Stayed for the Winter*” address some of the issues raised in their stories and reflections? Why do they think this is a traditional story for the Dakotah people? What stories have they read or heard which have a similar message?



Resources

North Dakota Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program

For more information, contact Troyd Geist at (701) 328-7591 or tgeist@nd.gov.

North Dakota Council on the Arts Publications, Recordings and Videos
http://www.nd.gov/arts/whatsnew/publications_recordings.html

My Relatives Say: Traditional Dakotah Stories as Told by Mary Louise Defender Wilson
Limited quantities available at the NDCA office, call (701) 328-7590, or contact Makoche Recording Company at <http://www.makoche.com/> or call (701) 223-7316 or (800) 637-6863. "They are wiser than us in many ways," says Mary Louise Defender Wilson. "The lessons and character of humanity and how to live in a civilized way are taught through traditional stories and are exemplified by the animals, wind and stars observed around us." This audio and enhanced CD contains cultural content, photographs, and video clips of the animals and artwork spoken of in the stories.

- The following sound clips are available:
Track 2, [The Blue Heron Who Stayed for the Winter](#)
Track 7, [The Star in the Cottonwood Tree](#)

Biography of Mary Louise Defender Wilson

http://www.wisdomoftheelders.org/prog1/bio01_mldw.htm

North Dakota Council on the Arts: Arts in Education Program Artist in Residence Artists Roster

Artists represented on the Artist-in-Residence Roster have successfully undergone a peer panel review process that evaluates their artistic and instructional abilities as they relate to artists working in a school residency program. The roster is a resource guide for communities searching for qualified professionals to conduct residencies in schools and other educational

settings. Artists provide students the environment to develop critical thinking skills, help build confidence, share their ideas with others, and be involved in the creative process.

http://www.nd.gov/arts/arts_ed/roster_folk.html

Arts in Education Grants for Teachers and Schools

Need help? Call (701) 328-7593 or e-mail lehreth@nd.gov.

All NDCA grants are only available online. To apply for a grant, or for more information, please visit: <http://northdakota.cgweb.org>

Artist in Residence. The Artist in Residence program provides matching funds for schools and other non-profit organizations to bring artists into North Dakota schools and communities to conduct residencies of three days or longer. This program is designed to provide students, teachers, and community members with hands-on experiences and personal interactions with working artists. Residencies give students an understanding of quality art and appreciation for cultural traditions. [Guidelines are available via this link.](#)

- Maximum grant: 50% of the artist's negotiated fee and expenses
- Deadline dates: April 1 and November 1 (submitted online)

Schools and Artists as Learning Teams (SALT) is a professional development grant program that supports and strengthens partnerships between schools, community arts organizations and artists. Through thoughtful collaboration, teachers and artists create opportunities for success so that all students achieve to high standards. The grant can be renewed for up to three years, dependent on legislative funding, which allows the opportunity to stretch and explore what it means to work collaboratively. [Guidelines, program overview and FAQ's are available via this link.](#)

- SALT Grant Program Time Frame/Deadlines Application deadline: Applications must be submitted by August 1.
- Notification: All applicants will be notified of funding status on or about September 1.
- Grant period: Grants begin in September and ends by June 30.

Teacher Incentive. The Teacher Incentive program is a means of providing financial assistance to teachers who wish to explore new and creative ways of incorporating the arts into the non-arts curriculum of a classroom. Projects may involve the visual arts, poetry/fiction writing, performing arts, architecture, folk arts, or any combination of artistic disciplines. [Guidelines are available via this link.](#)

- Maximum grant: \$300
- Deadline dates: April 1 and November 1 (submitted online)

North Dakota Indian Tribes Map and links to Tribal Councils

<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/dakotas/nd.html>

Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students

http://www.carts.org/artist_wilson2.html

http://www.carts.org/artist_wilson5.html

Center for the Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures

<http://csumc.wisc.edu/?q=node/102>

Association on American Indian Affairs

language Preservation/Retention

http://www.indian-affairs.org/programs/language_preservation.htm#samples

North Dakota Bird resources

<http://www.birding.com/wheretobird.asp>

Prairie Chicken Dance on You Tube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut-bQn88xEc>

