

**Sqwyits and Sqlelten7úwi:**  
Rabbit Salmon

**A Story of Courage**



Written by Brenda Celesta  
Illustrated by Jordan Celesta



*Eagles represent a variety of things in Indigenous culture, such as strength and truth, and these characteristics are the most important part of their significance. They symbolize a person's freedom through their majestic power and beauty. They lift good intentions toward others through their flight in the sky, or they're known simply to symbolize strength.*

*Most people would say the eagle is a bird that represents those qualities, along with the idea that overall, we consider them powerful because of their exceptional appearance amongst all the birds. They are a large bird with a five foot wingspan, able to fly and soar gracefully higher than most other birds, and they are quick and sharp but also seemingly inaccessible as they often perch themselves up high in the trees or mountains overlooking everything else.*

## **The Story of Sqwyits and Sqlelten7úwi: A Story of Courage**

Written by Brenda Celesta  
Illustrated by Jordan Celesta

In honour of Day of Suwentwecw  
Wenectwstn - Speaking Our Truth  
April 7th, 2026.

Special kukwstsétsemc to:  
My parents Ed and Louisa, my children Jordan and Raine, and my family.  
Jordan Celesta, Illustrator  
Lori Nelson, ELL Resource Teacher  
Carolyn Anderson, TTOC/TRU



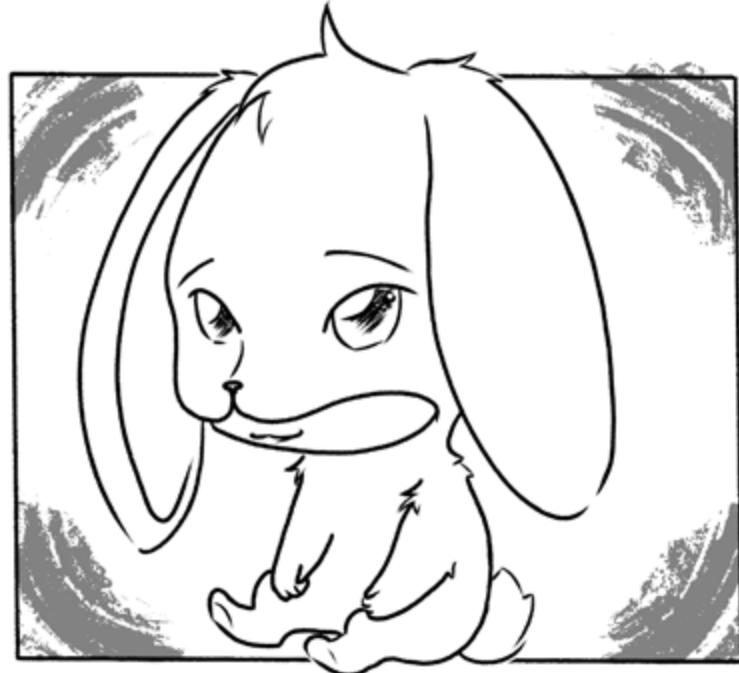
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**Vocabulary and Characters** *(in order of appearance)*

<b>Secwepemcú'ecw</b>	Secwepemc Nation or Territory
<b>Secwepemctsín</b>	Secwepemc Language
<b>Sqwyits</b>	Rabbit 
<b>Sqlelten7úwi</b>	Sockeye Salmon 
<b>Ts'i7</b>	Deer
<b>Spel'qwéqs</b>	Eagle
<b>Tsícwts'ecw</b>	Hawk
<b>Sen7áñse</b>	Goose
<b>Skú7pecen</b>	Porcupine
<b>Tseqwchq'wesp</b>	Flicker
<b>Tskikse7</b>	Chickadee
<b>Slleq'wqín</b>	Frog
<b>Sen7áñse</b>	Magpie
<b>Tmicw</b>	Land
<b>Kukstsémc</b>	Thank you
<b>Kukwstsétsemc</b>	Thank you
<b>Weytkp</b>	Hello
<b>Nlaka'pamux</b>	Territory, near Spence's Bridge
<b>Le7kwu</b>	Good water



The story of courage begins with Sqwyits  and Sqlelten7úwi,  who were good friends that knew each other since birth. Often, friends are very similar to each other; this friendship was one that honoured differences.




**Pronunciation**

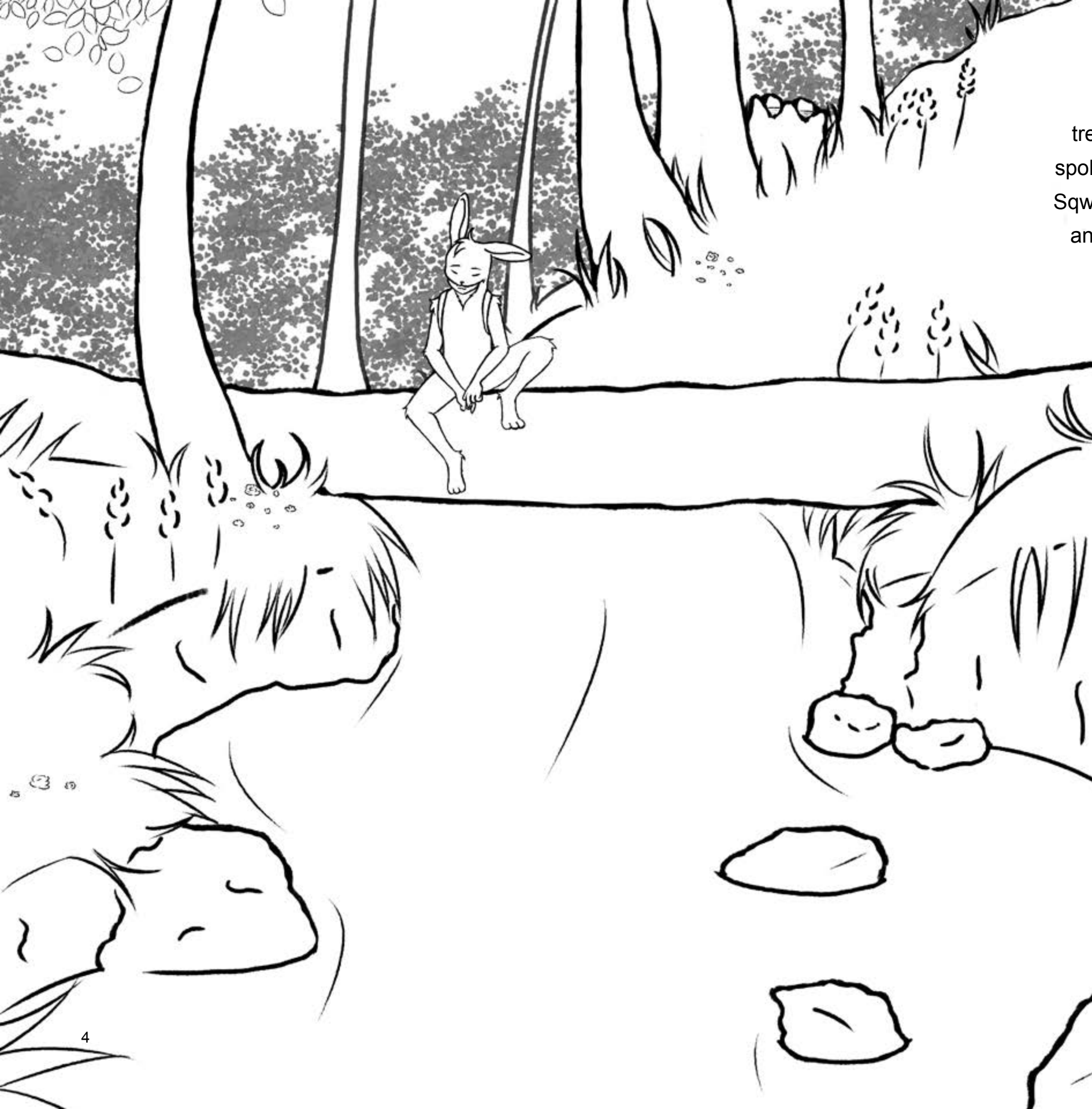
 Rabbit 	 Salmon 	 Eagle
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The forest was a thick and heavy treeline separated only by the fast flowing water of the creek, cutting through the middle and winding its way along the path. Even on a summer day it was clear and the sky opened up in a brilliant blue colour with barely a whisper of clouds. The trees were a safe place and a very cool place to be and escape from the heat. On days like this, Sqwyits was happy to have a place to go.

Sometimes Sqwyits  would follow the path in the woods to listen to the burbling and babbling of the creek as the water would find its way through the trees and over the rocks. The sound of the water was mesmerizing and soothing to Sqwyits. To Sqwyits, this was such a beautiful sight, to be in the woods, to enjoy the trees and the greenery.






On this day Sqwyits  enjoyed the sounds of the tree tops whispering and shifting, making it appear like they spoke to him, as he quickly darted along the edge of the creek. Sqwyits had spent the morning with his family, eating breakfast and listening to the laughter and at last, in a fast-paced rush, they all set out for the rest of the day to keep busy with the activities they enjoyed. Sqwyits didn't hesitate to rush off in a different direction himself because he had promised his friend Sqlelten7úwi that he would visit.


As Sqwyits scrambled over the rocks on the path, he thought about how many times he had run along this trail to the river where Sqlelten7úwi  lived - a familiar sight as he made his way through the trees. It was easy to follow as it wound through the forest down to the river where he had gone many times before to visit his friend.

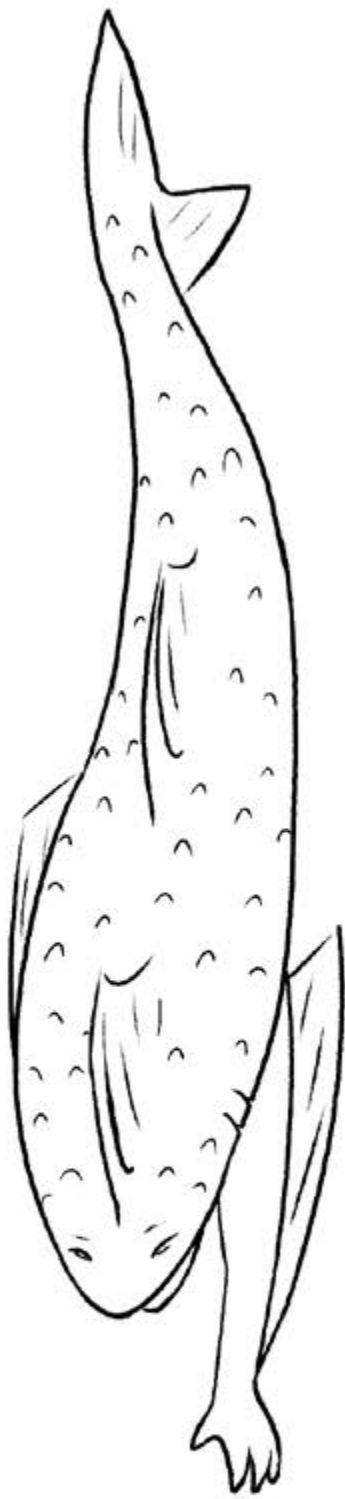
He quickly collected some pebbles and further along the way, he collected a few small feathers that he noticed near the water. He liked to see the feathers floating in the water, so he thought to himself that this is what he would do when he met his friend, Sqlelten7úwi. They would spend the afternoon floating feathers on the water, and maybe they could have a race to see which feather was the fastest. As he ran, he searched for a few bigger feathers, maybe another type, like tsícwts'ecw or sen7áńse feathers or maybe even a spel'qwéqs feather. He secretly hoped to find a spel'qwéqs feather.





The spel'qwéqs was such a magnificent creature; it symbolized all the qualities that Sqwyits  wanted for himself. Strength and honesty came immediately to his mind when he thought of the characteristics of Spel'qwéqs. He had always admired Spel'qwéqs for his brave and bold nature. He could fly high above the tmicw or land, and send people's good thoughts so that we may recognize them. Seeing Spel'qwéqs could bring happiness and good luck when people needed it the most. When the people saw Spel'qwéqs sitting high in a tree, they would stop to look and admire him from afar.

Sqwyits knew the people had a high regard for Spel'qwéqs and he wished to possess some of the same qualities. Finding a spel'qwéqs feather would be the closest thing to becoming all the qualities, as it would symbolize his own strength. He considered it something very special to find a spel'qwéqs feather, which he knew as the term being gifted with the feather from Spel'qwéqs. This term was used to describe a rare event that resulted in a spel'qwéqs feather emerging into his life at a time with great purpose. He waited for a time like this to emerge and scanned the rocks, but saw nothing.

He got close to the spot along the creek where it met the river. The creek was wider and the trees began to sparsely dot the landscape. Sqwyits began to get excited at seeing his friend Sqlelten7úwi . Suddenly, the water hit him across his face, and in his feeling of shock as he paused, he could hear laughter.



Sqwyits  realized it was Sqlelten7úwi  swiftly diving beneath the surface of the water and splashing Sqwyits in the face. His laughter echoed and Sqwyits cried loudly, “Hey!” He had been so lost in his thoughts that he didn’t notice that Sqlelten7úwi had been watching for him and, in his joking manner, decided to splash him with water using his strong tail. Sqwyits called out to Sqlelten7úwi, “Let’s go see if we can hunt for the colourful rocks!” Sqlelten7úwi quickly nodded at Sqwyits.

They moved along the water’s edge to find a quiet and slightly shadier portion of the river where the sqlelten liked to spend their days when the sun got too hot. It was not an unbearable heat today, but it would get warmer as it got later in the day. This spot was a great place to search below the surface of the water for the tiny round pebbles. Under the surface were beautiful coloured rocks, and when the sun was shining, these rocks sparkled and caught Sqwyits’ attention. Sqwyits liked these types of rocks because in the forest where he lived, most of the rocks were greyish in colour or sometimes a darker, heavy charcoal colour. When the trees were as thick as they were along the trail, the rocks were barely visible on the surface of the trail.

Rock hunting was one way that Sqwyits and Sqlelten7úwi spent their afternoon, splashing and wading in the water diving and grabbing these rocks from the bottom. They were always a little disappointed when some were brought to the surface and dried, and then weren’t as sparkly or as colourful as they were when they sat at the bottom of the river. Sqwyits forgot all about the feather he had collected and enjoyed the playfulness with his friend.

As the morning passed by, Sqlelten7úwi was getting distracted. He suddenly said to Sqwyits, “My family will move soon. We’ll go toward the ocean. That means I won’t be back until the fall months.” Sqwyits nodded. He was familiar with his friend’s constant movement and yet they always seemed to find each other along the river. Sqwyits liked to find special places that they could just enjoy a morning or an afternoon. Their friendship was unlike his other friends. Even though they differed from each other they always found each other to spend part of the day having fun near the river. Sqwyits’ family liked the forest and the meadows, while Sqlelten7úwi’s family enjoyed movement along the riverbed. Sqlelten7úwi rarely came into the forest, if ever. He didn’t go far from the river and would spend his time gracefully moving about.



Yet they really enjoyed spending time together as friends. Sqlelten7úwi was much more carefree than Sqwyits and sometimes had to resort to joking to get Sqwyits to just enjoy the moment.



Suddenly, Sqwyits could hear footsteps clacking along the rocks as Ts'i7 suddenly appeared near the edge of the water. Ts'i7 called out to Sqwyits and Sqlelten7úwi, "Hello! How are you two today?" Sqwyits smiled as Sqlelten7úwi yelled loudly splashing his tail again, "Ts'i7, how are you? We've been rock hunting all morning. It's good to see you here. Want to join us?" Ts'i7 laughed as the water splashed on his face. He approached, jumping a little to show his joy at finding them near the water. They chatted and played a few games together.

Suddenly, Ts'i7 told them he saw some feathers along the mouth of the creek. Feeling excited again, Sqwyits wanted to check this out. And the three of them moved along the creek to find them. They weren't spel'qwéqs feathers, but he gently picked up two feathers which appeared to be a tseqwchqwesp feather and a kwsicw feather. Sqwyits took each of them and put them in his bag hanging across his shoulders. He'd keep them and add them to his collection.



Suddenly, Sqlelten7úwi  called out as though he was in pain. He had a sharp breath and his eyes became large and round as he looked directly at Sqwyits . "Help me!"

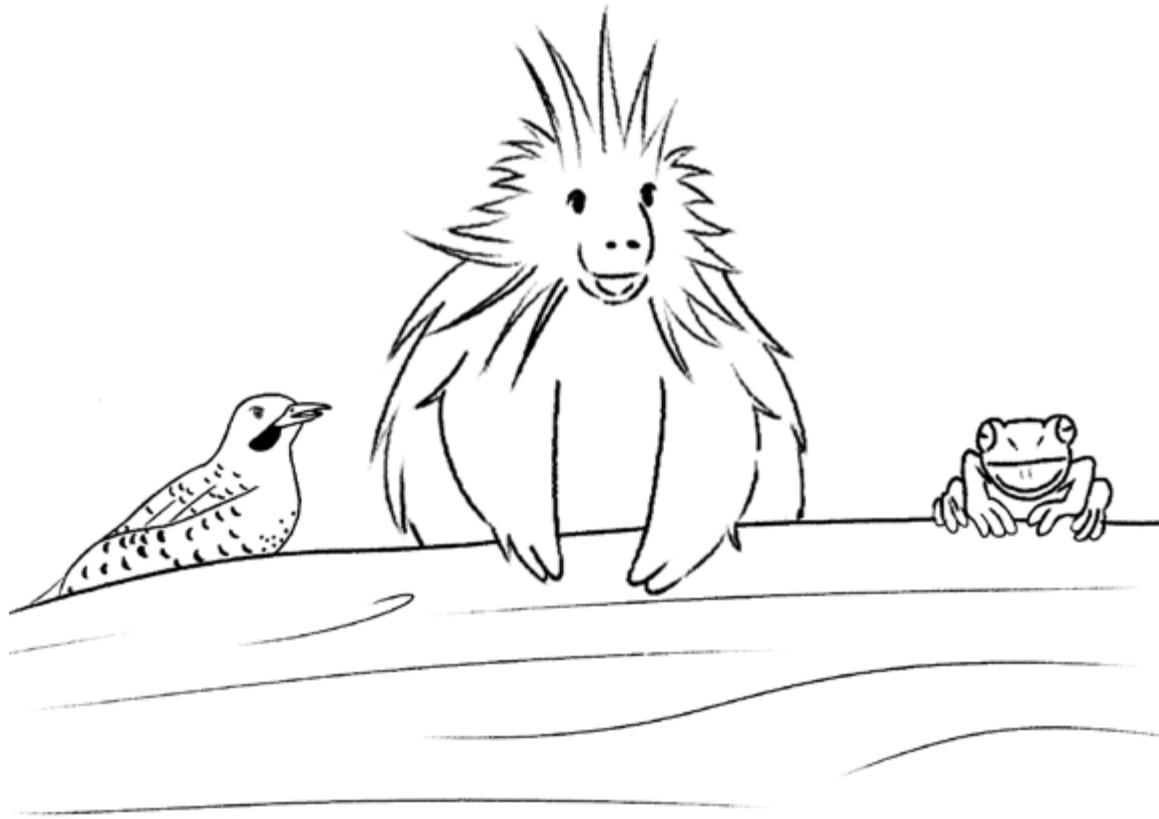
Sqwyits wasn't sure what was happening but was the quickest of the two and moved as fast as he could to be near the shore of the river. When he reached Sqlelten7úwi, he noticed Sqlelten7úwi was splashing but not moving anywhere. He was panicking as his tail thrashed, splashing water all over Sqwyits.

Sqwyits yelled as loudly as he could, "Sqlelten7úwi, stay calm. I am trying to help you!" He pushed himself below the surface of the water and could see that Sqlelten7úwi was caught between two branches and was unable to free himself. He was wedged between them and the water had made it impossible to move.

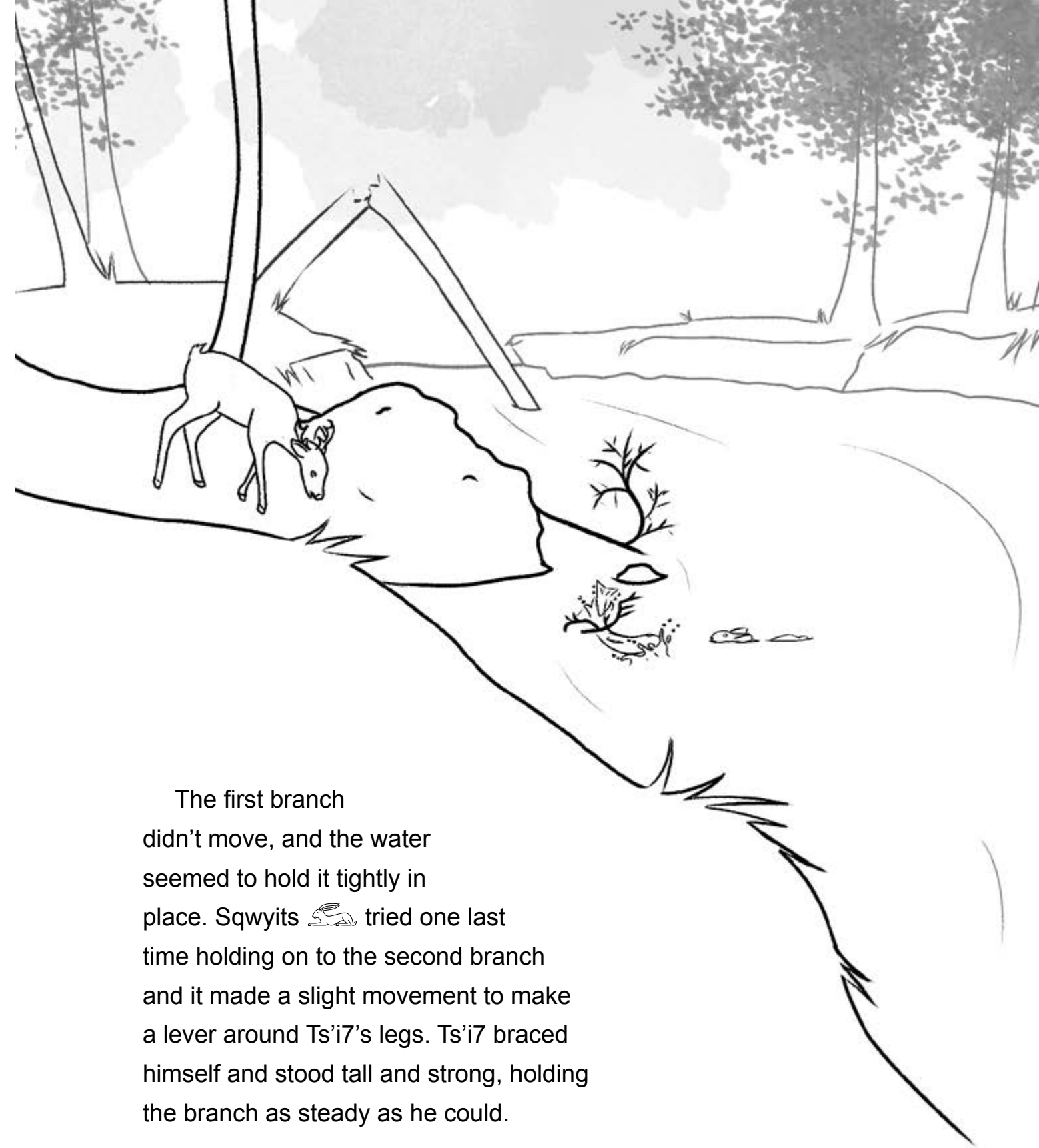
Ts'i7 came in closer but because of the noise that Sqlelten7úwi was making, Sqwyits noticed other animals had come out of the forest to see what was going on. This made him want to act quickly to free Sqlelten7úwi from being stuck.


Sqlelten7úwi was so agitated and loud that it was difficult to calm him. Ts'i7 gently spoke and said, "Sqlelten7úwi, let Sqwyits see how he can help you. Stop yelling!"

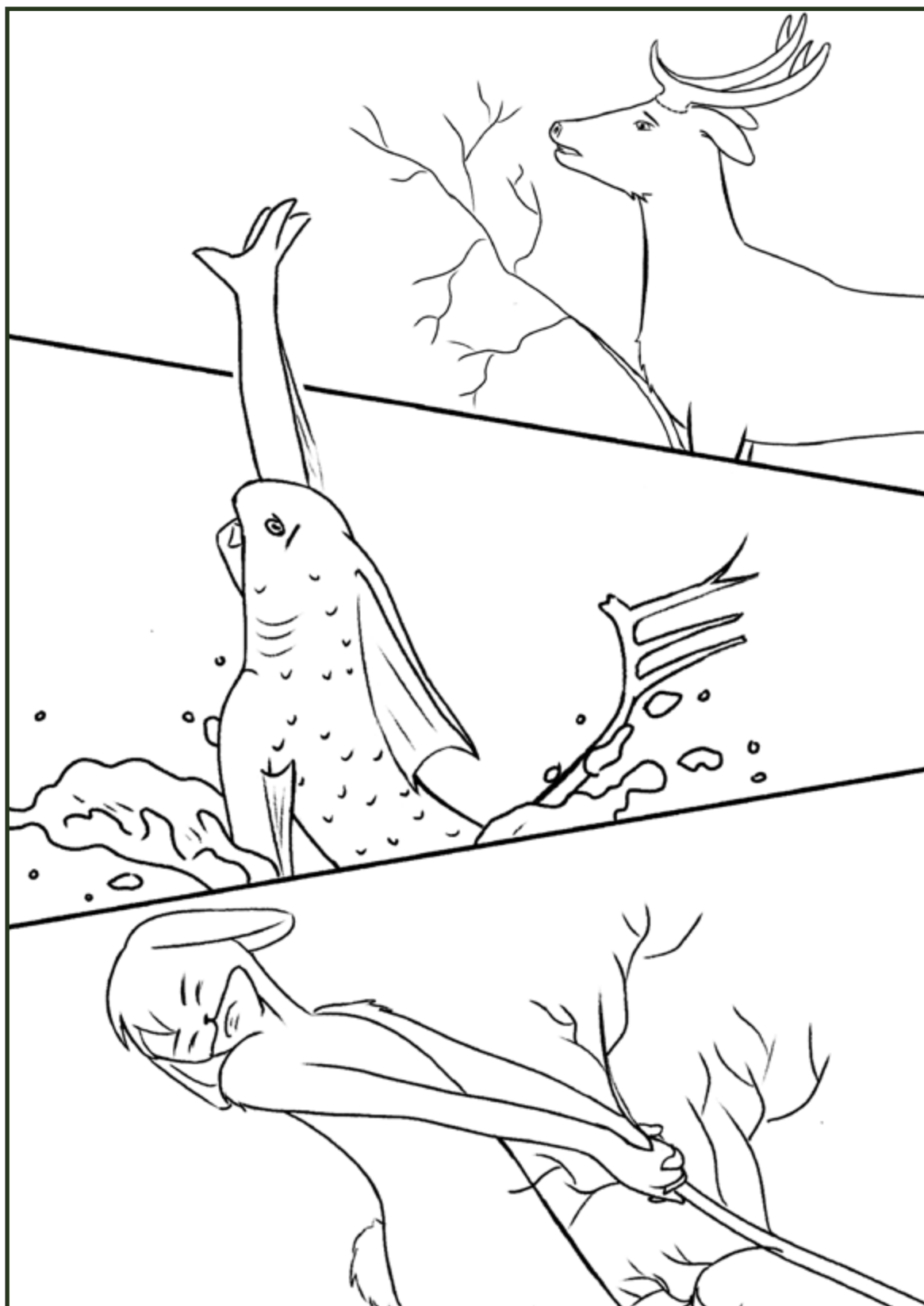
Sqlelten7úwi didn't calm himself and gave one last struggled effort to free himself from the branches, but couldn't. He knew the branches had a hold on his tail and he could not free himself unless Sqwyits could help.




Sqwyits noticed there was Skú7pecen, Tseqwchq̄wesp, Tskikse7, Slleq̄wq̄ín and Sen7á̄nse standing close enough to see what was happening with their mouths hanging open, as though in shock over the sight of Sq̄lten7ú̄wi splashing and yelling. It was so loud that Sqwyits worried Sq̄lten7ú̄wi would draw the attention of all the other animals. He didn't want an audience while he tried to help. So quickly he pushed with all of his might against the branches. They were crooked and curved, but they didn't move. He asked Ts'i7 to move closer to shove the branch and try to wrap it around his legs to free Sq̄lten7ú̄wi, and let him swim away.



The first branch didn't move, and the water seemed to hold it tightly in place. Sqwyits  tried one last time holding on to the second branch and it made a slight movement to make a lever around Ts'i7's legs. Ts'i7 braced himself and stood tall and strong, holding the branch as steady as he could.




Sqwyits reached down and pulled Sqlelten7úwi  out from between the branches. Sqlelten7úwi was lying still and Sqwyits suddenly became worried that they hurt his friend. He was quiet. As Sqwyits looked closely at Sqlelten7úwi's face, suddenly water splashed over him. And he felt the branch brush across his feet. Both of his friends laughed, and it echoed across the water. Sqwyits realized his friend was free and Ts'i7 had let go of the branch. They all began to laugh, but Sqwyits felt relief rush over him as well. His friend wasn't hurt, and glad and thankful to be free. What a moment!

As they emerged from the water to the edge of the river bank, the animals moved in closer and suddenly they heard a slight whistling sound from above. Looking up, Sqwyits noticed Spel'qwéqs had been watching them the whole time. Spel'qwéqs circled and flipped his tail at the group below as if to say, "Good job!" Sqwyits waved to Spel'qwéqs, still in awe as he watched him flying above, and wondering where he had come from.

Spel'qwéqs had seen them struggling with the job of getting Sqlelten7úwi freed from the branches, even though he was up so high that they could barely see him himself.

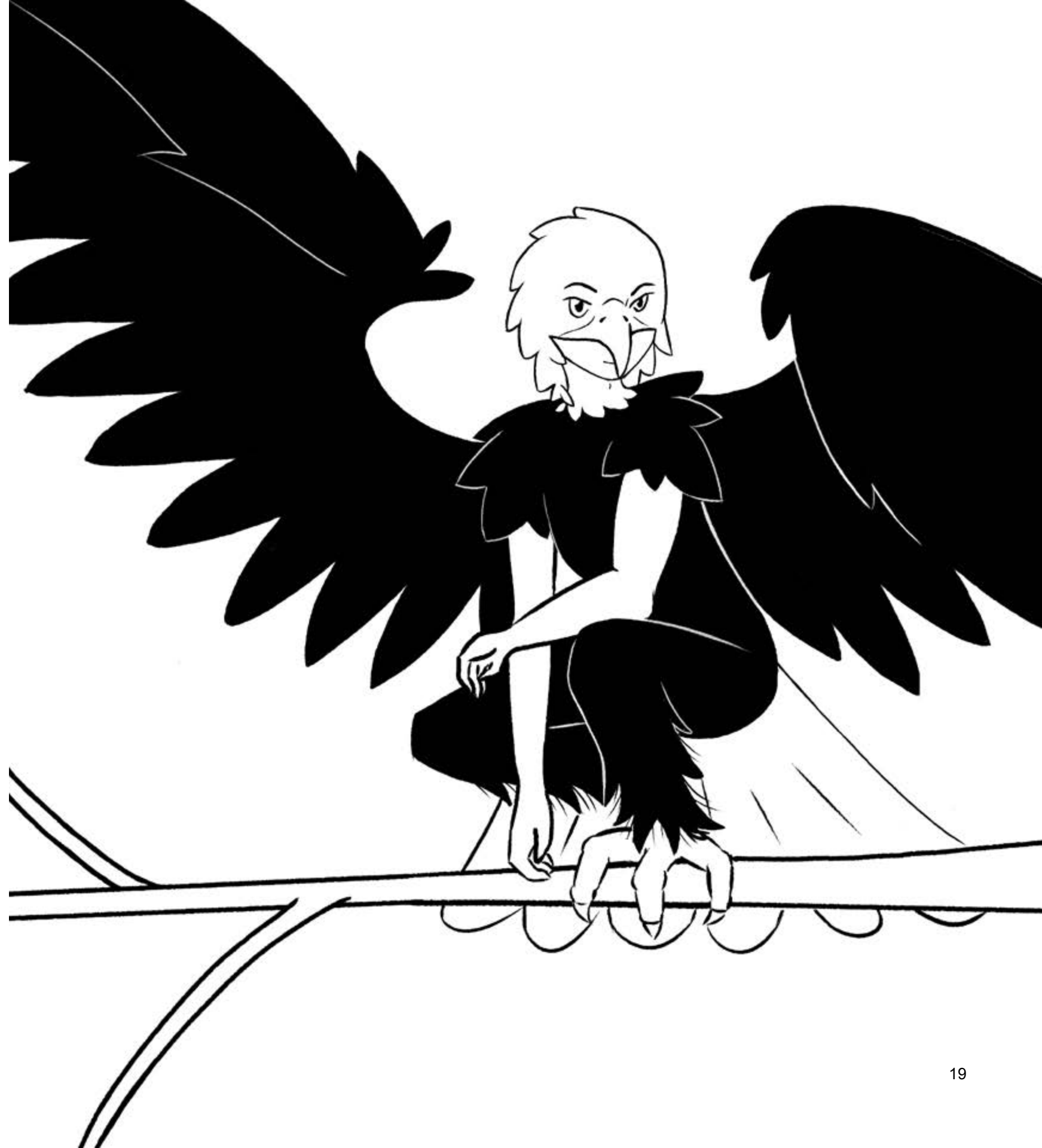



Sqwyits  still waved to Spel'qwéqs and suddenly felt very proud that he helped his friend. A moment he would not forget!

Sqlelten7úwi 🐟 thanked him while Ts'i7 continued to laugh at how dramatically Sqlelten7úwi had behaved over finding himself stuck. They continued with their search for the rocks and played their games in and out of the water for a while longer. Laughter rang out across the water. As the moment passed by and the rush of the excitement left them, most of the other animals had talked to Sqwyits 🐰 or to Ts'i7 and said, "Good job in helping poor Sqlelten7úwi from being caught by a branch." They said it was funny but felt relieved he was free, as they knew Sqlelten7úwi to be carefree as he was always in movement. Seeing him looking so panicked was entertaining, yet very serious, as he could have gotten hurt from the branches.

Sqwyits took all of this attention with ease and he felt happy to help.


As the afternoon came to a close, Sqwyits knew he had to be heading back home to his family. They all said their goodbyes and made plans to meet again on another day. Sqwyits ran to the spot near the creek. He was about to run along the creek toward his home, when he noticed a feather in the rocks. He got a little closer and could hear from high above the whistling sound of Spel'qwéqs once again. The feather was caught between the rocks right at the edge of the water. As he got closer, he realized it was Spel'qwéqs' feather. He reached down and picked it up. He knew Spel'qwéqs was watching.



Sqwyits  gazed at it as he held it, long, straight and beautiful, a feather from the tail of Spel'qwéqs. He knew he had gifted it to him. He had earned this feather because he had helped his friend. Again he looked up at Spel'qwéqs, who circled around and, for a last time, flipped up his tail feathers and flew off.

This would be a moment that Sqwyits would remember for a very long time. He knew he had shown a selfless act when he helped his friend. Spel'qwéqs had shown him he possessed the qualities he had used to describe Spel'qwéqs earlier in the day. On his way home, he went over in his mind what he saw in Spel'qwéqs that he had admired. The qualities he admired most were Spel'qwéqs' courage, leadership, the power at overcoming challenges, his fearless demeanour, and his powerful vision.



Sqwyits shared the story with his family again, feeling very proud to help his friend Sqlelten7úwi . He knew that sharing the story was important as this feather was his first feather given to him as a special gift. Knowing he had shown that he was brave made his smile bigger. He stood taller as he shared because he felt strong. He spoke to his family about how, at first, he was afraid and then was relieved his friend was not hurt. He told them about the other animals saying thank you to him and he could see how grateful they were. He said it would be a moment that he would share with others.

Sqwyits knew that this was a symbol of a part of what he would become as an adult later in his life. He had shown courage to help his friend Sqlelten7úwi and bring together Ts'i7 as his helper. He had shown leadership to do this in front of the others that had stopped to watch what was happening. He overcame the challenge even though he was unsure of himself. He knew Spel'qwéqs had also thanked him, even though he did not stop and thank him in person. He knew Spel'qwéqs was a powerful creature who had a powerful vision at seeing this at the moment that Sqwyits was least expecting. Sqwyits had shown a part of himself that he had been careful to keep to himself until that moment. He went home feeling sure that this feather would be a treasure that he would keep safe and treat as a special reminder to keep working toward those qualities that he had admired.

## About the Author

Territorial Acknowledgement Secwepemc/  
Nlaka'pamux

Weyt-kp xwexwéytec, Brenda Celesta ren skwekwst. I am originally from Simcpwetkwe-or the people of the North Thompson River in the Secwepemc Nation. I was raised in the Simpcw First Nation and as a child I was blessed to be able to hear my grandparents speaking Secwepemctsin. The people have lived in Secwepemcúlecw since time immemorial.

I am the daughter of Ed Celesta and Louisa or 'Le7kwu'. The granddaughter of hereditary chiefs from two lines on both sides of my grandparents' families, one at Simpcw, and one at Tsqésceñ. The granddaughter of strong and independent grandparents on my mother's side covering the territory of Tw'all Valley and a place called Pukiast, within Nlaka'pamux Nation. I am a mother of two; Skllékstem, meaning rain and Jordan, Tsuts'wéye or butterfly. I am the partner to the late Gino Odjick of the Algonquin Nation, in Quebec. I am a Simpcw woman, raised in my home community, grounded and rooted in the stories of my grandfather, Henry Celesta who traveled throughout Secwepemcúlecw, hunting, fishing and gathering.

As a teacher, I have worked in several schools, and it's this journey that has shifted and changed who I am as an individual but has never shifted and changed my belief about remaining connected to the tmicw (land). This connection is deep rooted and makes me who I am, and as a child. who I would become. I became a teacher to make Secwepemc a part of School District 73. I wanted to be a visible representation for students to see themselves reflected and have their voices heard.

Kukstsémc

Brenda Celesta



## About the Illustrator

Weytkp, I am Jordan Celesta born and raised in Secwépemc territory on the Simpcw First Nation reserve 15 km north of Barriere, BC. As a child I had many artistic aspirations, I carried sketchbooks and pens everywhere I went, and my family encouraged me to pursue my passion from a very young age. My mom Brenda Celesta is a teacher in School District 73 and my biggest supporter. Through her I learned the value in challenging myself and my artistic abilities.

I am a self-taught artist though I have taken academic courses in contemporary art and history at Thompson Rivers University. Recently, I moved to creating digital art expressions. My goal has been to expand the boundaries of Indigenous art through modernized methods and technology.

I grew up surrounded by Secwépemc cultural and historical understanding with stories, songs, dancing, being out on the land- as my mom made it an important part of my day-to-day life. She made it possible for me to fully appreciate and share who I am and where I come from as a Secwépemc person while I was growing up. My goal is to share that knowledge and experience because I believe that this is important. Through art I am bringing history to life through modern methods while leaving behind my own style for generations to come.

Kukstsémc

Jordan Celesta



*Indigenous people hold feathers in high regard, especially the eagle feather. Owning and displaying eagle feathers meant the owner had achieved many things of significance. They earned each one or were gifted. They symbolized strength, or an honour given upon them by another. The gift meant the receiver was being recognized for a courageous deed.*

*Courage, Leadership, Overcoming challenges, Fearless, Powerful vision gifted-acquired or given to another person, an Indigenous belief that when something significant occurs or an act of courage or extra kindness is presented with a gift of some significance, like an eagle feather or tobacco offering.*

