

How Eagle Became Leader of All Birds

Developed by Members of the Klamath, Modoc and Paiute Committee

Geographical Area: Plateau Region

Vocabulary: wits physically fit descending
mastered ceremonies ritual
endure

Reading Motivators: What significance does the eagle have today?

- to Indian people
- to the country as a whole

Display pictures of eagles, owls, hawks and other birds and ask students to decide which is the best and why.

Why do we need leaders?

Discussion Topics: Review the concept that storytellers told a series of stories which formed a cycle told throughout the winter. Ask students to complete missing parts of this story. How would they have told it?

Review what makes good leaders and how they are chosen. Were the bird's qualities for leadership good for them? Why or why not?

How did Hawk and Eagle prepare for the contest and how does their training compare to athletes' training today?

Discuss the use of animal characteristics which describe people (i.e., "wise old owl", "sly as a fox", "slippery as an eel", etc.). Ask students to think of others.

- Follow-up Activities:**
1. Prepare and present a puppet play using the following script. How might students create puppets that can fly?
 2. Have students research and report on:
 - a) eagle, hawk, owl and other birds
 - b) animals inhabiting the marshes and lakes of the Klamath Basin
 - c) endangered species and how they are protected
 3. Bring in speakers to address the following topics:
 - a) wildlife in local area
 - b) conservation
 - c) endangered species

- d) game regulations
 - e) ecosystems (food chains)
4. Have students roleplay an interview with the characters of the story, as is done at sporting events. Have them make up lists of questions to ask onlookers, as well as flight contestants.
 5. Locate where the Klamath tribe is on a map. Assign students to report on past and present information of that tribe.

How Eagle Became Leader of All Birds

Narrator

Owl

Eagle

Hawk

Bluejay

Woodpecker

Magpie

*Sun/Moon (one person - Sun on
one side, Moon on the other)*

Narrator: Years ago, birds were like people. They walked around and they could talk just like humans. The only difference from humans was that birds could fly. These birds admired the humans because everything in their villages always went smoothly.

The birds began to notice that things did not seem to go so smoothly in their villages. They wondered why. One day all of the birds decided to hold a council meeting. Birds came from far away. Owl who was known to be very wise began the meeting.

Owl: On behalf of all birdkind, I thank you for coming to this meeting. As you know, life for us has been tough.

Woodpecker: Yeah, the humans don't have it so bad. Things seem to go smoothly for them. What do they have that we don't?

Owl: Well, for one thing the Indian children have their parents. The Indian parents even have parents. They all have a chief and holy men and, above all, a Great Spirit. Everybody has someone to follow and it seems to work. What we need is a strong and faithful leader.

All birds: Yes! Yes! That's right. That is a good idea!

Bluejay: Our leader should be strong and wise. How are we going to decide who it should be?

Woodpecker: I think we should choose Eagle as our leader.

Magpie: The leader should be a good hunter and a very swift flyer. I think Hawk would be a good leader.

All birds: Eagle's best! No, Hawk is! I vote for Eagle! Oh, what do you know?

Owl: Both Eagle and Hawk are very fine birds, I'm sure. But we still have a problem. We must choose between the two. Does any bird have any idea as to how we are supposed to make this choice?

Bluejay: I propose a contest of skill and of strength.

Woodpecker: Oh, a contest!

Magpie: Yeah, a contest! That sounds good!

Eagle: Yes, Lets have a contest.

Owl: All right, a contest it is! Both Hawk and Eagle shall have to prove themselves in flight! The one who can fly the highest shall be our leader. Eagle, Hawk, you both have five days to prepare yourselves for the contest. In five days we shall meet here again and hold the contest to determine just who shall be our leader.

(All but Hawk and Eagle leave. They remain on opposite sides of the stage.)

Narrator: After the meeting broke up, the two chosen birds began preparing themselves. They went through different preparations. They both knew they had to be physically fit, as well as mentally fit, in order to complete their appointed task.

Eagle: *(Flapping his wings)* I must exercise my wings and make them stronger. They must carry me higher than I've ever gone before. Tomorrow I shall fast and ask the Great Spirit to help me do my best.

Hawk: *(Hopping up and down)* I will need strong leg and back muscles if I am going to fly my highest. And I will practice every day so I can win.

(Both birds practice flapping their wings, jump up and down, travel in circles and bend at knees to show they are warming up.)

Sun/Moon: *(Passes in front of Hawk and Eagle, rotating from Sun to Moon five times to signify the passing of time.)*

Narrator: Finally, the day of the contest arrived and both contestants were ready. All the birds gathered around as the two took their places.

Owl: The contest to determine who will be our leader will now begin. Are the contestants ready?

Eagle & Hawk: Yes, I am ready!

Owl: Hawk, you will go first.

Narrator: So, Hawk took off. Up he flew, higher and higher, until he was almost out of sight.

Bluejay: Golly! He's way way up there!

Magpie: You can barely see him. He's starting to circle.

Woodpecker: Boy, that's going to be hard to beat. *(Pause)* Here he comes. He's starting to descend.

Narrator: Hawk circled several times as he descended back to earth.

All birds: *(All cheer, clap, whistle, etc.)*

Owl: Well, well, that was a good flight, Hawk. You would make a good leader. But Eagle must take his turn. Eagle, get ready!

Narrator: Off flew Eagle to try and beat the magnificent flight of Hawk. Up he flew, higher and higher, until he was almost out of sight.

Magpie: Wow! He's way, way, way up there and he's still going.

Bluejay: I'm not even sure I see him anymore.

Woodpecker: I don't see him. He's flown so high he's out of sight!

Narrator: Yes, Eagle flew up and out of sight. He began circling, as he descended to earth. He finally landed in front of the cheering crowd. *(All birds cheer, whistle, clap, etc.)*

Owl: Well, well, that was quite a flight! And for showing us that you have mastered the art of flying, you are now our new leader. As for you Hawk, you are still very important to us. Don't feel left out.

All birds: We agree! We are proud of you! Congratulations!

Narrator: And from that day on Eagle has become more than just a leader for the birds. He is used in Indian ceremonies, rituals and gatherings. He has even been chosen as the national bird of the United States.