

THE GRANDMOTHER CEDAR TREE

(Northwest)

Long ago, there lived a grandmother cedar tree. She was very, very large and very strong. But one day, she felt very sad and lonely. Her sadness was so strong, she felt like she was drowning in her own tears. The Creator could feel her sadness, and the Creator called upon the south wind. And the south wind carried a little baby cedar tree and planted the little seed right next to the grandmother. She called this little seed her grandson.

It began to grow, and the branches began to go out fresh branches and the deer love to chew on fresh branches. But Grandmother would move her big, strong arms back and forth, and scare the deer away. And the tree would grow some more. And sometimes the wind the north wind, especially was so strong it could cause a little tree to bend and break. But Grandmother would put her strong arms around her grandson, and protect him from the strong winds. And he would grow some more. Sometimes, the heat of the sun was so unbearable it felt like it would burn your skin. But Grandmother would put her arms over her grandson and give him shade. And he would grow some more.

Now the grandson was very, very large and very strong. But sometimes he also felt lonely and sad. Grandmother had such a strong mind, she would send her mind out, and she would call all the birds of the forest with her strong mind. And they would come and they would land on her strong arms and sing beautiful songs for the grandson. And he would grow some more.

Many seasons passed. And now Grandmother had become very, very old and very weak. She wasn't strong like she used to be. She didn't have strong arms; she had lost some of her branches. And she said to herself, There is no use living any more. I am good for nothing. I can't even help myself. She was giving up her life.

And the grandson looked at his grand-mother and he said, Grandmother, when the deer came to bother me, did you not move your arms back and forth and scare them away?

Grandmother, I will move my arms back and forth and scare the deer away.

Grandmother, when the north wind came and the wind was so strong it felt like I was going to fall over and break, did you not put your arms around me and protect me from the strong wind? Grandmother, when the strong wind comes, I will put my arms around you.

Grandmother, when the heat of the sun was so strong it felt like my skin would burn, did you not put your arms over me and give me shade? Grandmother, I will put my arms over you and give you shade. Grandmother, when I was very sad and lonely, did you not use your strong mind to call all the birds of the forest, and they came and landed on your strong arms, and they sang beautiful songs for me? Grandmother, now I have a strong mind, and I will send my strong mind out to call all the birds of the forest, and they will land on my strong arms and they will sing for you.

Grandmother, you took care of me. Now I will take care of you. And that is all.

- as told by Johnny Moses, Whis.tem.men.knee (Tulalip)

