

Gluskonba and the Drum

Overview:

This story is about how Gluskonba [KLOOS-kon-BAH] introduces villagers to the drum. It takes place in a time when no one in the village shares anything with anyone anymore. Through sharing the song of the drum and bringing the joy of dance, Gluskonba teaches the villagers the importance of sharing and caring for others.

Dr. Bruchac says: “Gluskonba is the first one in the shape of a human being. The traditional story is that when the Creator, the Great Mystery, Ktsi Nwaskw [ket-SEE-nee-WASKW], had finished making creation, some dust was left on the hands of the Creator. That dust fell on the Earth and began to shape itself into the shape of the first one, the form of a human being, and when he stood up, there was a hole in the ground where he had been. The hole filled in with water. Gluskonba tried to pull himself up, pushed up mountains, and made channels down those mountains, which became the green mountains and the Adirondacks. So that is what Gluskonba was, and he had great power and tried to do things to help the people.”

Story:

Dr. Bruchac shares: There was a time when the people no longer shared with each other. They stayed in their own wigwams and kept to their own selves. They had things, but would not share them with anyone else. For example, a family might be very good at making canoes, but they kept those canoes to themselves. Another family might be very good at knowing how to catch fish, but they told no one else how they did it. Another family might be very good at making baskets, but they would never share those baskets with others, and so on. So as a result, everyone was suffering because they were not sharing.

Gluskonba saw this, and he made the first drum. Then he walked into the village and began to play the drum and sing. As he played that song and sang, the people came out of their wigwams, and their feet began to move. Pretty soon, they were all dancing in a circle, singing along, and holding hands as they were dancing in that big circle.

And when Gluskonba finished, he said, "You see how enjoyable it is to share that song and that dance together? So it is if you share all the other things you have with others: Your life will be better and so will theirs. So I leave you this drum. I leave you this song, to remind you to always share." And that song's name is “Wi Gai Wa Neh” (This is Fun), a friendship song we often play. To bring people together, we'll sing this song and dance in a big circle with people holding hands.

Glossary:

- Gluskonba [KLOOS-kon-BAH]: The first one in the shape of a human being
- Ktsi Nwaskw [ket-SEE-nee-WASKW]: The Creator, the Great Mystery
- Pitawbagw [BEE-taw-BAGW]: Lake Champlain

Discussion:

- What do you think the moral of the story is?
- What are the kinds of things we can share with one another?
- What is a story you can share with someone next to you? How about a song or a dance move?

Activity:

- Pick something you can use as a percussion instrument, like a drum, and try Gluskonba's tune. It sounds like a heartbeat. You can find Dr. Bruchac playing the drum in our video collection. Think of what percussion instruments you can use that are part of nature. (A table is made of wood; a drum can be an animal skin.)
- Plan a sharing event. This can be a potluck or someone sharing something they know with the group. It can also be sharing a kind word, or making arts and crafts with nature themes and giving them to others.