

## Four Legends Featuring Plants

### #1. *The Wild Spring Flowers ( story about Yellow Bell)*

**Background:** This legend is part of a book of stories collected from members of different bands that form the Yakima Tribe, including people of the Wenatchee, Entiat, Chelan, and Columbia tribes. Tribal elders gave their consent to have these stories recorded as part of their knowledge of traditional Yakima culture. Traditionally legends were told by grandparents to children in the cold months of the year. Children were expected to listen carefully and learn the lesson in the story. These legends were drawn from a time before the coming of human beings when the animals were people. A few humans with supernatural powers are also in these stories. The most prominent character was *Spilya'y*, Coyote, who showed human beings how to live and behave properly. Often humorous, *Spilya'y*'s antics teach important lessons and offer explanations for why the world is as it is today.

**Featured plant:** Yellow bell, *Fritillaria pudica*. Bulb dug as Indian potato.

**Source:** *The Way It Was* (Anaku Iwacha) (Yakima Legends), edited by Virginia Beavert, 1994. Pg. 86-91. Permission for use here granted by the Yakima Nation, 9/96.

### *The Wild Spring Flowers*

*All that Yellow Bell ever wanted to do was to be lazy and sleep while everyone worked industriously. That is why she looks so dull today. When you have something to do, don't wait until the last minute to get ready or you might end up like Yellow Bell, unprepared!*

Over in the Chelan-Winátsha area there were some early spring flowers getting ready to come out as soon as the weather became warm and the snow began to melt. They were busy mending and coloring their costumes to put on when they came out. Everybody was busy, mixing paints and coloring, or flaring out their hats, except one girl. This girl was lazy and she slept while everybody else was busy.

Violet would go over and awaken her, "You had better get up, it's nearly time to go out. If you don't get up soon you won't be ready!" But this girl would turn over and push her hand away, "Oh, leave me alone. I'm still sleepy. There is still a lot of time. You girls are just too anxious."

The next time Bitter Root would go over and shake her cousin, "Wake up, it's beginning to blow warmer outside. You had better get up and get your clothes ready. If you don't your suit will be all ruffled and faded." But the girl would frown and bury her bushy head a little deeper into the moss. "Leave

me alone! Can't you see I'm resting?" Her clothes hung limp and discolored, while the other girls were proudly displaying brightly colored costumes and beautiful hats, all opened out and ready to put on their heads.

Little Brook began to sing loudly to this girl, "Wake up! Wake up!" But the girl would not listen, and instead buried her head deeper into the moss. Lily whispered to her sister Camas who was coloring her purple costume, "I'm afraid our cousin is not going to come out this year if she doesn't get up and prepare her clothes." They shook their heads sadly. But the girl kept on sleeping. She did not awaken even when Grizzly Bear turned over on her bed in the next house. When Grizzly turns over on her bed it's like an earthquake shaking the mountains.

Pretty soon Chinook Wind came by and announced his arrival, "Come out little sisters, its time for you to brighten up the world!" Then he raced on to announce his coming to other creatures.

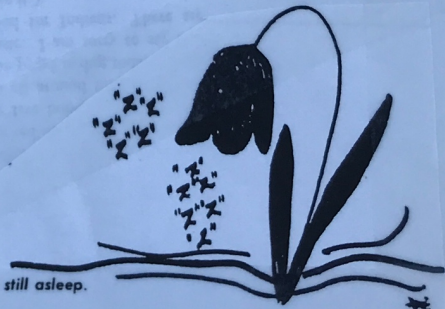
The girls scrambled around putting on their costumes, straightening up their hats and lacing their mocassins. Violet ran over and shook the girl vigorously, "Wake up! Wake! The Chinook Wind is here! It's time to go out!" The girl scrambled out of bed, put on her mocassins that needed mending, and she tried to run her fingers through her hair to straighten it. Her costume was hanging limply on a branch and she vainly tried to splash some leftover paint on the skirt and the leaves, but it was not too effective. Her hat was faded and hanging over on the side.

The girls were all lined up at the door ready to go out, and this lazy girl was still trying to put on her clothes and her hat. The others were begging her, "Hurry, you'll make us late, get in line." They began to march out and she was the last one to come out, all rumpled and unprepared.

The Violet was beautifully attired in purple and green, smelling sweet. The Yellow Violet was brilliantly glowing with health, and the Bitter Root was all pink and feminine. But, alas, the girl who would not get up and prepare her clothing, all ragged and faded, with her hat hanging crooked on her head, was the Yellow Bell. This is the reason all of the spring flowers come out as soon as the Chinook Wind blows cozy and warm. They are wearing brilliantly colored costumes, their hats open and prettily perched on their heads, while the Yellow Bell never opens her hat into full bloom, and it is usually perched on the side of her head and crooked. She is not usually adorned in bright colors, but a dull mustard yellow color.



Spring flowers getting ready to come out in the spring.



Lazy Yellow Bell still asleep.