

The Brave Woman of Pysht

Long Ago this story was told by ʔəmtiyačə (Tim Pysht) about the brave young woman from Pysht.

The Pysht people were being killed by strangers who had just arrived. The boys and men had become few, most had been killed. The elders and young women were very sad. They had no men left to protect them.

There was a young woman, named ʔəʔʔúʔ, who said, “We cannot be still! The strangers will come again. They were killing us! So I say let’s get ready! They will return and when they get here again we will fight!”

The elders said, “Oh, ʔəʔʔúʔ, it is good what you are saying.”

Then the young women said, “We will get ready!”

So they got ready. The young women prepared. Then the snow came, and then the wind and then good summer weather. And the berries ripened. Then one young woman got up and told her grandmother, “I’m going to pick some salmon berries.”

Her grandmother said, “Be careful now. Be careful.”

The girl walked. She was not walking very long before she saw someone running. She climbed up a tree to look and she said to herself, “It’s our enemy!” Then she looked out at the sea and saw three canoes arriving. Then she climbed down and ran back to the village.

She got there and said, “ʔəʔʔúʔ! ʔəʔʔúʔ! The enemy has arrived!”

So ʔəʔʔúʔ told the young women, “Hide the elders and the children!” They ran and took the children and hid them in the bushes.

Then she gathered the young women and ʔəʔʔúʔ said, “Do not show yourselves when they land, we will ambush them.”

So the young women said, “Oh, that is what we will do!

Then one canoe landed and the young women sprang and clubbed his head. None of them could come ashore. They killed them. Then another canoe got there and ʔəʔʔúʔ told them, “We will kill them all! There will be none left!”

Then the third one arrived, but they had seen was happening, and turned around and went away. They did not want land. So ʔəʔʔúʔ said, “Let them go! When they get home they will tell everyone what happened here.”

Then they returned. The elders came forward and they saw that had happened. They said to the young women, “Let us drag them out into the deep sea.” So they went. And the elders said, “Those big canoes throw them away, too. There are lots of sharks out there.”

So the young women went out and tipped the dead into the water as they were told.

That is why the sharks are good. That is why they say the sharks are good to the Pysht people. They are friends because they were treated well.

Told by Adeline Smith , 1995. Translated by Adeline Smith and Timothy Montler

Transcribed by Timothy Montler