



Communication, Language, and Literacy Activity for 54 to 60 Months

"Loon Necklaces" told by Annie K. Alexie from Kwethluk

Once there was a Raven and Loon; they were friends and they were both white birds, all white.

Raven loved being white in the winter because he could put out food to attract other animals and sit right near it waiting for them to come. They would never see him in the snow since he was so pure white, so when they came to get food he could catch them. Ah yes, he loved being white in the winter because he could trick other animals and being a trickster is what he loved best. Why get your food with honest hard work when you could trick someone?

Ah yes, but in summer ... yes, in summer, it was a different matter. Being white was not so good in the summer. It just made Raven easier for others to see.

One day Raven had been out hunting all day, and he had not gotten a thing. He wondered why not. And then Raven flew over a lake. Way down there he could see his friend Loon, white Loon, sitting by the edge of a lake. How easy it was to see her with the sun reflecting off her white feathers. Just then Loon started laughing as only Loon can laugh. "Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha," Loon laughed. "Raven, I see you way up there!"

"My goodness," realized Raven, "that's why I never have any luck hunting in the summer. All the animals can see me from way off." Raven swooped down and landed by Loon. "Loon, what can I do?" asked Raven. "All the animals can see me coming way far away, and I never can catch anything to eat in the summer. I wish I could be dark in the summer and white in the winter like Ptarmigan."

"Maybe I can paint you," said Loon. "Then you could be dark in the summer and white in the winter."





"Oh, could you?" asked Raven.

"Not for nothing," said Loon. "I want you to paint me. I want a pretty design on my top so everyone can see how beautiful I am. I only eat bugs and little fish, so I don't have to hide."

"Alright," said Raven, "but I want you to paint me first."

"No way!" said Loon. "You paint me first!" Raven had played many tricks on Loon before, and she knew if she painted Raven first, he would fly away without painting her.

"Okay," said Raven. He picked up a handful of black mud.

"Oh, no!" said Loon. "That will just wash right off when I sit in the water. Use burnt stick from the fire." So that's what Raven used. He really got into this painting thing. He painted a white necklace around Loon's neck and a pretty pattern on her back.

"Come look at yourself," said Raven. Loon went down to the water's edge and looked at her reflection.

"Oh Raven, how beautiful am I! I didn't know you were an artist!" exclaimed Loon.

"Of course I am," said Raven. "I can do everything well. Now paint me pretty, but use mud. I want to wash off before winter. Paint me up pretty now." So Loon picked up some ooey, goopy black mud. Of course there was no way she could draw with it like Raven could draw with the stick of burnt wood charcoal. She plopped a handful of mud down on Raven's back and started to spread it in wavy stripes; but Raven kept twisting around to see what she was doing. Every time he did, the mud got smeared. Pretty soon he was black all over.

"That's not much of a design, Loon," said Raven, "but at least it will help me hide. I would like a pretty necklace like I gave you, though."

"I don't know if I can do it with this mud," said Loon. "I might be able to if you stay very, very still." Raven did try to stay still. He did a pretty good job of it, too, but Loon just could not get that mud to do what she wanted. Finally she said, "Okay, Raven, come look." Raven went down to the water's edge.





"Oh, Loon, how could you?" exclaimed Raven. "Now I am just an ugly black bird!"

"Well, it won't last forever," said Loon. But Raven wasn't listening. He picked up a stick of charcoal and started chasing Loon around in the hot sun. He threw the stick at Loon and hit her legs. She stumbled to the lake and dove in. Raven flew off and they didn't speak all summer. When it started getting colder, Raven decided he should wash off that black mud before it snowed. He went to the lake and washed and washed. But do you know what? It never came off! It got baked on by that Alaskan sun that shines all day and night in the summer.

Raven is black to this day and still angry about it. Whenever Raven sees Loon, he lets out an angry cackle. And Loon still has her pretty designs. She still can't walk right, but she doesn't care; she'd rather swim anyway. But when Loon sees Raven, she just laughs. For once she made a deal with Raven and came out ahead of him.

