



MESSAGES ON STONE

ANNEX 1 | MEMEKUESHUAT

Indigenous peoples have represented several mythical beings in rock art paintings and carvings. With this legend, you will gain a better understanding of one of them: Memekueshu (Memekueshuat in the plural form).

First read the legend below.

The Legend of the Oxford House Rock Painting

A woman of the Oxford House Band was very sick. The woman's family asked an old man named Mistoos Muskego to come and cure her of her illness. The old man tried again and again to cure the woman but nothing seemed to work. Finally the old man said that there was only one hope left and that was to go and ask the men who lived in the rock if they could give him the powerful medicine needed to cure the woman. The old man left in his canoe and paddled up to where he knew the men who lived in the rock dwelt. (This spot is today a high granitic rock face rising sharply straight upwards from the Semple River even as it was in Mistoos Muskegos' day). The old man was very powerful and used his power to enter into the rock unto the home of the men who lived in the rock. The old man talked for a long time with the men who lived in the rock and asked for the medicine that would cure the woman and in the end he was given the medicine he requested.

The old man then left the rock and paddled back to the home of the woman who was ill. The medicine of the men who live in the rock was given to the woman who was ill. This medicine cured the woman. The old man said that all should remember it was the men who lived in the rocks who were powerful and could give medicine to a powerful old man. The old man then made a paint and asked all people to come with him to the home of the men who lived in the rocks. The old man and the people then paddled their canoes up to the solid rock where the old man left his canoe and stood on the rock ledge by the water. He told the assembled people how he had received the medicine. He then said that no one should forget the men who lived in the rock and that he would draw a painting of them. (He then drew a painting approximately two feet high, stick figured and with lines running from the head giving a rabbit-eared look). The people now would remember [where] the men who lived in the rock lived and what they looked like and all returned home.

As told to C.J. Wheeler in the Cree First Nation of Bunibonibee (Oxford House). Adapted from de Wheeler, C. J. (1975). *The Oxford House pictograph: The May May Quah Sao are alive and well at Oxford House*. Dans J. Freedman et J. H. Barkow (eds.), *Proceedings of the Second Congress, Canadian Ethnological Society* (p. 701-714). Canadian Ethnology Service Paper 28(2), Mercury Series. Ottawa: National Museum of Man.



What characteristics of Memekueshuat are revealed by this legend?

- Physical: in human form, but with large, rabbit-like ears

- Personality: healing powers, generosity towards humans

What values and beliefs significant to the Indigenous peoples are conveyed by this legend?

- Power: Some people have supernatural powers.

- Interactions: Supernatural beings can help humans if they appeal to them respectfully.

- Acknowledgment: It is important to remember that supernatural beings exist
and that they interact with humans. If they help us, we must thank them.

- Community: All the people travelled to the rock to thank the “men in the rock.”