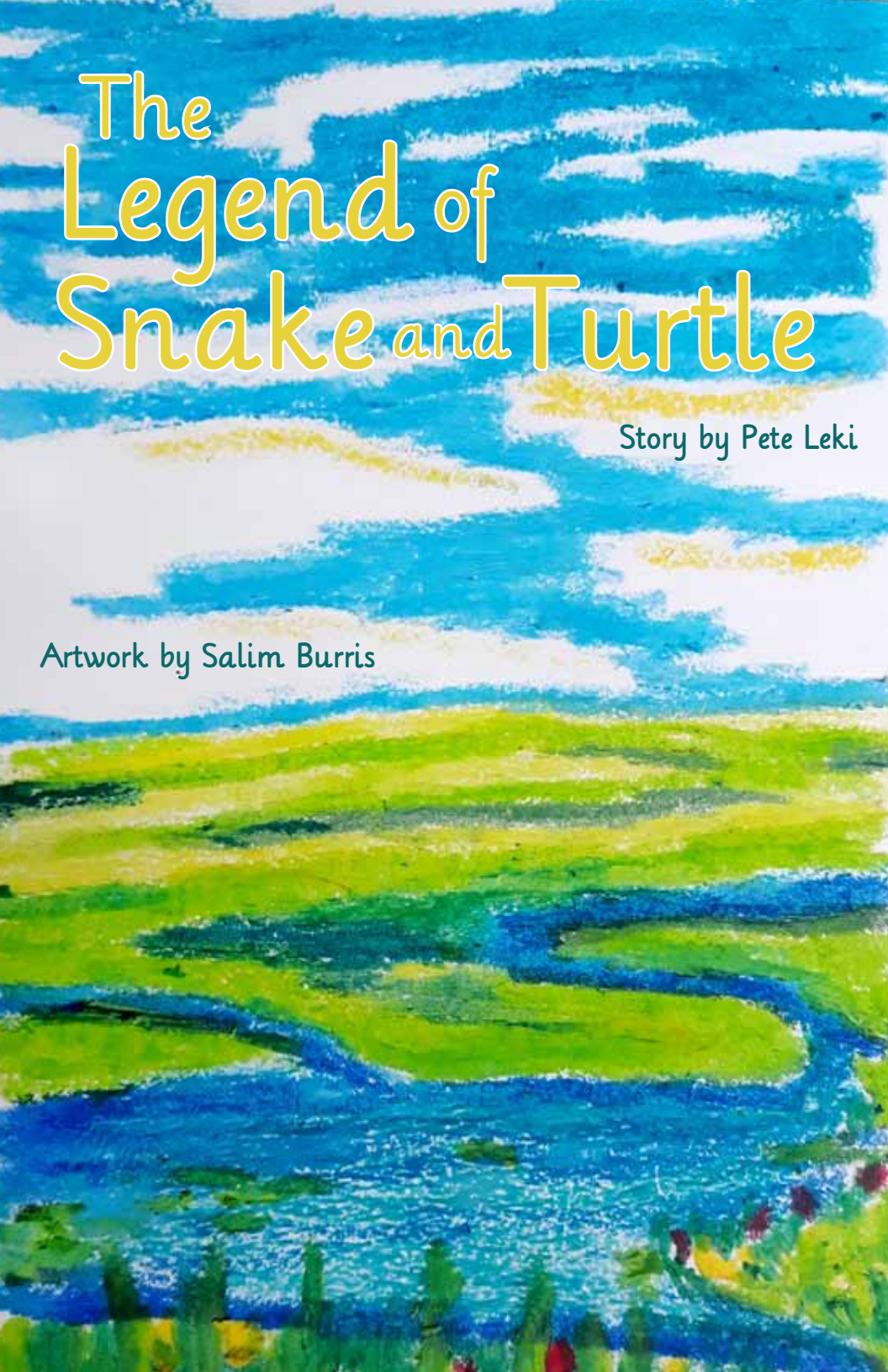


The Legend of Snake and Turtle

Story by Pete Leki

Artwork by Salim Burris



Pre-K and Kinder Winter Ecology

We had a problem that took us by surprise. We, our community gardeners, had done some good maintenance on the Native Edibles (Watershed) Garden in anticipation of the start of school the August before. But, before I knew it, the neat twig fences had been trampled, the copses of currants and American plum had been occupied by fantasizing 4-5 year olds who mercilessly snapped branches laden with fruit, to fashion weapons and wands and whips. Worst of all, having breached the fencing that protected the main garden, home to 25 American Hazelnut, endless currants and raspberry, Jerusalem artichoke sunflowers towering in the autumn sun, within an instant of time, the little ones had created a maze of trampled pathways through the wilderness. And worst of all they found their way onto the tender, fragile backs of Turtle and Snake, two effigy mounds that lay hidden in the lush growth. They had been planted, Snake with Northern Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), and Turtle with Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*) on a thin layer of soils that covered their boiler cinder bulk. The kids literally wore them down to the bone, exposing the cinders and damaging if not killing these fine native grasses. Somehow we had to protect these two creatures and the lush growth that hid them.

We considered concertina wire and electric cattle fences, but dismissed them as too costly. Parents and other potential supervising adults seemed unwilling to monitor their progeny, and in fact relished the children's absorption in healthy play. They enjoyed the kids fanciful stories about "the jungle". We had a problem and inspiration came in the birth of the Legend of Turtle and Frog.

Story and Lyrics | **Pete Leki**
Artwork | **Salim Harris**
Spanish version of the song | **Jamal Leki**
Graphic design | **Lucia Gárces**
Waters Ecology Program

Online book March 2022



A long, long time ago,

in the place where our playground is, there was a river! The water was clean and fresh. Flowers and grasses stretched out for miles. Children splashed and swam in the river. Ducks lived there. And millions of fish: tiny silver ones and huge, dark ones. Elk and buffalo came to the river to drink. Foxes and bobcats hunted there. Frogs sang and butterflies floated around.

On the edge of the river, in the tall grasses, two friends lived: a turtle and a snake. Every day the friends met each other when the Sun rose.

They warmed themselves in the Sun.

They caught flies , GULP!

They ate crickets – ULP! Creeek!

They slept.

When it got too hot they went for a swim together and ate little fish – YOOOP!

They lived for a long time and grew very big.

They were very happy.

One day Turtle said to Snake: Do you hear something?

Yes, said Snake, something growling.



As they spoke they noticed that the water around the river was draining away.

What's happening to our water, Snake? Said Turtle.

Soon the river was shrinking. Frogs and fish were flipping around in the mud. Big birds were walking through and eating them.

Snake hissed to heron: What's happening to the river?

The heron looked with his big eye, swallowed a frog and said: The Humans are moving the river. They are making it deeper and straighter. There will be no place to stand and catch fish. Too deep!

What will we do, Turtle? asked Snake.

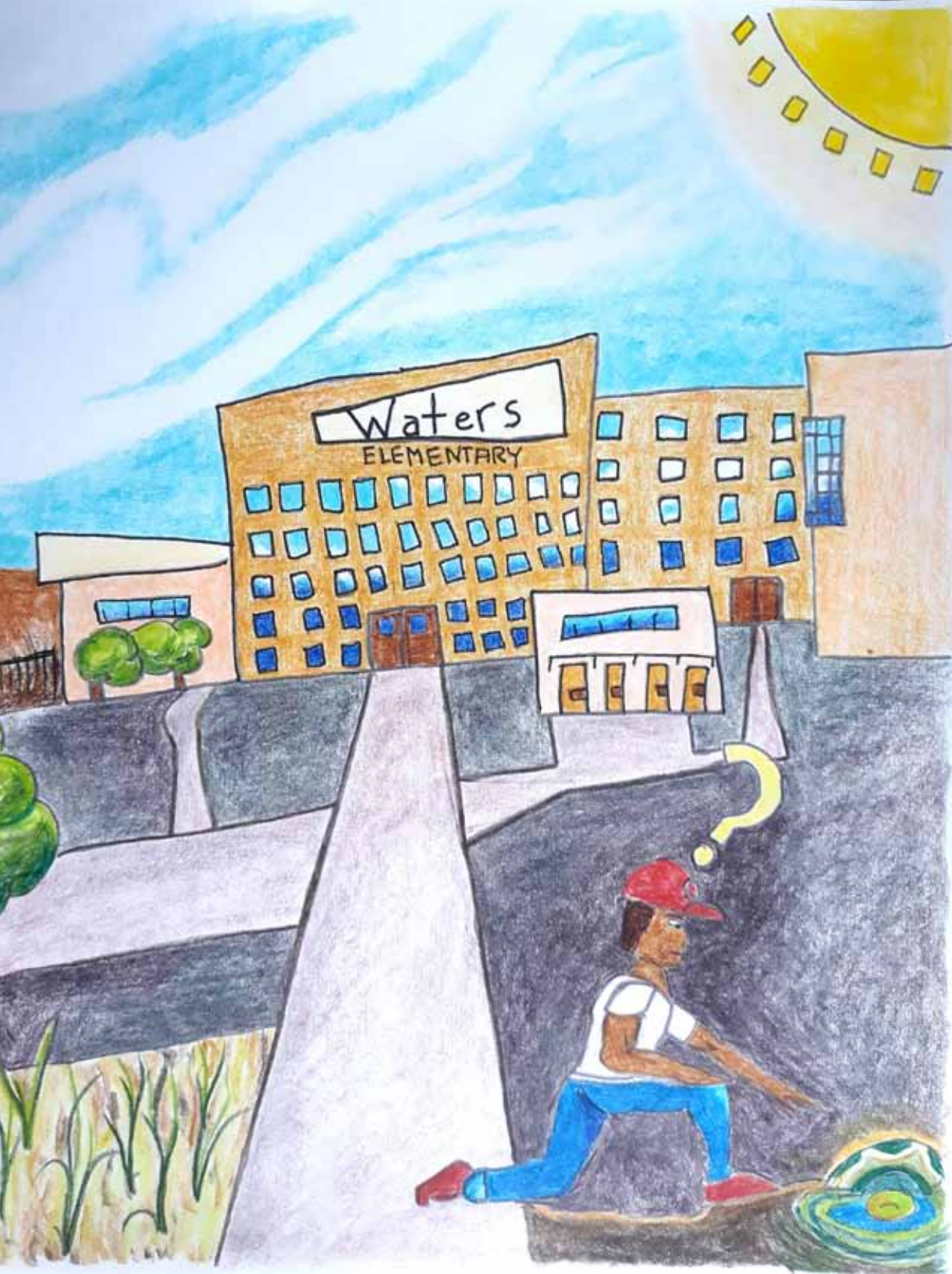
Let's get out of here. Follow me!

So turtle started to move his great body through the drying grass. Snake followed. They crawled and slithered for hours and found themselves in the same place. The river had disappeared.

They were thirsty, hungry, and lost! They lay down exhausted.

Then they heard an awful, growling roar. A truck came and covered over the whole place with

Asphalt! Hot, smelly, thick, oily asphalt. It covered the land where the river once was. And covered the two friends, Snake and Turtle.



Many years passed. A school was built where the river once ran. A playground was built on the asphalt.

One day a group of children, parents and teachers decided that they wanted flowers, and grasses and butterflies and birds in the place where the asphalt was.

Every day they brought tools and broke through the asphalt and hauled it away.

One day they made a discovery. Under the asphalt they found a shape that looked like a huge snake! And just in front of the Snake they found a little hill. But the hill seemed to have legs and a head. It was a Turtle! The two friends were found! Their bodies had turned into soils!

The children said: Let's plant flowers and berries and nuts for Turtle and Snake, so they will feel happy and at home.



And that is what they did! They planted berries and nuts and potatoes and onions and grapes and cherries and yummy strawberries.

They built fences out of branches so that people didn't step on the plants. And they built paths so that people could walk through and eat berries and smell the flowers. They planted many plants so that Snake and Turtle would be protected and hidden, the way animals like to be.

But, if you look closely, you can still see Snake, following Turtle, looking for the River that used to run here.

Two Friends

By P.Leki

*A long time ago
Where our school now stands
A river used to flow
Chi-ka-go*

*Two friends slept
In the morning sun
When it got hot
They would go... swimming
In the Chi-Ka-Go.*

Chorus

*O-oh, They were good friends there
Turtle and Snake and a Great Blue Heron
O-Oh, now at last they're free
Asleep in the garden for Eternity.*

*One day Snake heard a growling sound
She looked around
The water in the river it was draining away
The two friends ran
But were covered anyway
Oh, sorry day.*

Chorus

*O-oh, They were good friends there
Turtle and Snake and a Great Blue Heron
O-Oh, now at last they're free
Asleep in the garden for Eternity.*

*A hundred years later
The children made a plan
They pulled up the asphalt and freed the land
There, underneath, in the chinkers and oil
the friends were found
turned into soil.*

Chorus

*O-oh, They were good friends there
Turtle and Snake and a Great Blue Heron
O-Oh, now at least they're free
Asleep in the garden for Eternity.*

Chorus

*O-oh, They were good friends there
Turtle and Snake and a Great Blue Heron
O-Oh, now at least they're free
Asleep in the garden for Eternity.*

Spanish Chorus

*O-Oh, Eran amigos si
La garza azul, la víbora y la tortuga
Oh oh estan a salvo al fin
Siempre dormiditas en su jardín)*

