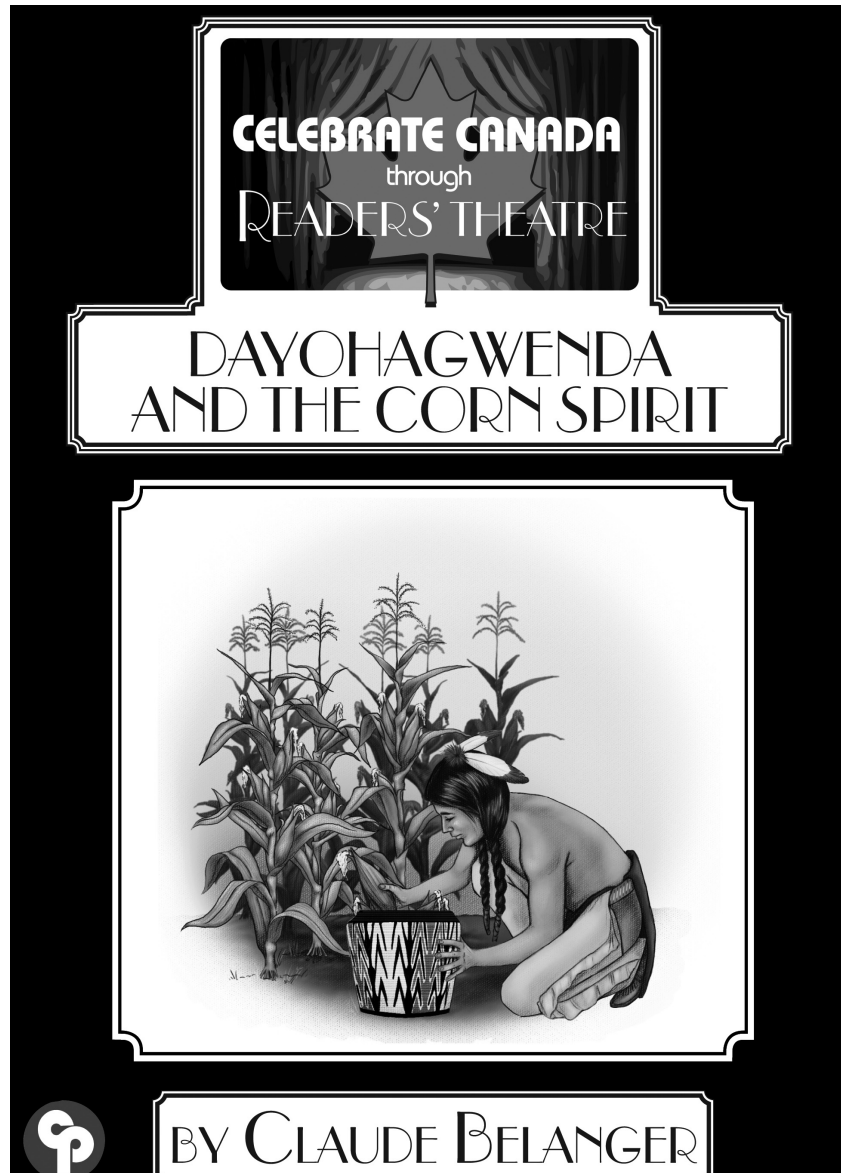


# DAYOHAGWENDA AND THE CORN SPIRIT

## Online Resource



By Claude Belanger

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## A Summary of the Script

In *Dayohagwenda and the Corn Spirit* a young hunter leads by example. He models the ways of his people. He demonstrates careful observation and learning by trial and error. He respects the wisdom of his elders and is thankful for the gifts of the spirit world. The demonstration of all these character traits earns Dayohagwenda respect and the esteem of his peers. And he still has time to invent games and to play them.

## First Nations people and corn farming

For the First Nations people in *Dayohagwenda and the Corn Spirit* corn was not a crop of local origin. During the early periods of corn cultivation Dayohagwenda's tribe would have had to learn how to maximize yield under local growing conditions.

## First Nations farming and the division of labour

Field clearing and preparation was heavy work done by men. Seeding, care of plants and harvesting was generally done by women with the help of children. Men were hunters and were often away for periods of time.

In *The Legend of the Corn Spirit*, Dayohagwenda promises to teach good farming habits to the people. He contributes to the long-term survival of his people and at the same time pleases the Corn Spirit.

# Activities Before Reading

1. To build vocabulary as well as familiarize students with this readers' theatre script, do this word-association activity. Each student is given a recipe card or piece of paper on which they print their name. Large printing is best because these cards will be used in a display. The teacher then gives a word. On the other side of the card, each student prints a theme-related word in response to the teacher's word. Not just any word will do. Students may be called upon to justify their response word, explaining the relationship between the teacher's word and their response word.

For example, ask students to provide a response word for "corn." Student response words might include: plant, farm, tasty, cob, field, butter, sweet or muffins.

The students assist the teacher in sorting the words by suggesting categories. Display the words on the blackboard or flip chart or interactive white board. The organizing activity is a chance for the teacher to lead discussions to build knowledge that will serve to provide background information about the readers' theatre script. Let curriculum requirements suggest where this leads. During discussion, much can be learned by having students explain their reasons for the response word and for the classification category. The more experience students have with this activity the more creative they get with their word choices. Also, students become aware of the value of organizing as they sort and classify the words.

2. Examine the title, illustration and other information on both covers of the book. Ask students what they can predict about the storyline from the covers.

3. Use the knowledge gained through discussion during activities one and two to begin a KWL chart.

4. Read aloud the statements of Young Hunter #1, Young Hunter #2, Young Hunter #3 and Young Hunter #4 on pages 3 and 4 of the script. Ask students to explain what they have learned about the character traits of Dayohagwenda by listening to what these young hunters said about him.

5. Introduce your students to the bean bag game (see pages 6 and 7) and play the game in your classroom. Keep up student interest by progressively adding to the challenge and changing the rules. Turn it into an arithmetic game. The students can continue to practise mental arithmetic all year long by inventing their own games that require score keeping. The use of bean bags is a good idea to start as it relates to the story. The author has the characters in the story use bean bags because beans have traditionally been another staple farming crop of many North American First Nations.

# Tips for Voice and Expression

Character	Reading Level	Description
Narrator	challenging	The narrator provides background information as well as a clear transition from one scene to another.
Young Hunter #1	challenging	Young Hunter #1 is sceptical of the need for change. He challenges the ideas of Dayohagwenda. He is more interested in playing games than in corn farming.
Young Hunter #2	easy	Young Hunter #2 watches Dayohagwenda. He makes observations and sees that there may be merit in what Dayohagwenda does.
Young Hunter #3	easy	Young Hunter #3 is also a good observer. He is much like Young Hunter #2.
Young Hunter #4	easy	Young Hunter #4 is perhaps the greatest supporter of Dayohagwenda.
Dayohagwenda	challenging	Dayohagwenda has learned from his elders and their stories. He becomes a respected leader.
Chief	moderate	The chief, as the authority figure, gives legitimacy and meaning to the actions of the tribe members.

# Extending the Experience

1. In order for people to adapt to their environment they need to know about their environment. This of course is true of the First Nations people depicted in this legend. Have a class discussion on the observations of nature that were made by the characters in *Dayohagwenda and the Corn Spirit*.

2. Using the Internet and your school or classroom library, research about First Nations people who grew some of their own food. Learn about their other foods, their homes and their clothing. Consult the **Books of Interest** and **Websites of Interest** lists below.

3. All people need food, shelter and clothing in order to survive. Collaborate in small groups to share information on what has been learned about the food, shelter and clothing of the people in Dayohagwenda and Corn Spirit. (Don't forget to examine the front cover of the script.) Record and organize the information under the headings: Food, Shelter, and Clothing. Include drawings.

4. Discuss the following with your students: gathering information, organizing information, using information. Then, do the following activity.

- (a) Point out to your students that, on page 11, Dayohagwenda says: "Don't forget your brothers and sisters." Explain that, in Dayohagwenda's village, there were no schools. Children needed to learn the skills necessary to provide food, shelter and clothing for themselves and others.
- (b) In small groups, students collaborate to make a list of the skills that the brothers and sisters of Dayohagwenda's village needed to learn.
- (c) Organize the skills list.
- (d) Pretend that you are going to start a "Survival Skills" school for the children in Dayohagwenda's village. Create a poster to advertise your school, making it sound like an exciting place to learn. Will there be guest instructors? Will there be school trips?
- (e) The author of *Dayohagwenda and the Corn Spirit* is very proud of his book. Make an extra copy of your poster and send it to him in care of Curriculum Plus Publishing.

## Books of Interest

*Atlas of the North American Indian*

by Carl Waldman (Checkmark Books 2000)

*Keepers of the Earth: Native Stories and Environmental Activities for Children*

by Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac (Fifth House 1989)

*People of the Longhouse: How the Iroquoian Tribes Lived*

by Jillian and Robin Ridington (Firefly Books 2001)

*The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*

by Diane Silvey and illustrated by John Mantha (Kids Can Press 2005)

*The Iroquois: People of the Northeast*

by Evelyn Wolfson (Millbrook Press 1992)

## Websites of Interest

Canadian Museum of Civilization

[http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz3d\\_1e.shtml](http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz3d_1e.shtml)

Education - A Zillions Uses for Corn!

<http://www.ontariocorn.org/classroom/products.html>

Legends — Corn Spirit

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/The-Corn-Spirit-Tuscarora.html>

Origin, History and Uses of Corn

[http://www.agron.iastate.edu/courses/agron212/Readings/Corn\\_history.htm](http://www.agron.iastate.edu/courses/agron212/Readings/Corn_history.htm)