

Maple Tree and the Bugs

Keywords:

- Maple tree – ininaatig (ih-nih-naah-tig)
- Bugs – manijooshag (muh-nih-jew-shug)
- Beaver – amik (uh-mik)
- Mouse – waawaabiganoojii (waah-waah-bih-guh-no-jee)
- Bear – makwa (muh-kwuh)
- Bird – bineshii (bih-nay-shee)
- Flicker – mooningwane (moo-ning-gwuh-nay)
- Woodpecker – baapaase (baah-paah-say)

Story:

A long time ago, a lot of bugs crawled onto a maple tree. The bugs got into his bark, and they were itching him. It was driving the maple tree crazy. Even though the maple tree had branches and roots, he could not scratch himself.

The maple tree called out to his friends, the animals. "Can someone help me get relief from all this itching?" he said.

A beaver came to the maple tree. The beaver had big teeth. "I could help, but if I chew on your bark, I could hurt you," the beaver said.

Then a mouse came to the maple tree. "Maple tree, I can dig down to your roots, and all of us mice can help, but we could hurt you," the mouse said.

So then the bear came to the maple tree. The bear had big claws. "I could help, but if I claw at your bark I could hurt you," the bear said.

So they were all trying to think of what to do.

The birds were flying by, and one of the birds was a flicker.

"Maple tree, I have a relative. His beak is sharp and he can dig in you, but he won't hurt you," the flicker said.

So the woodpecker came over to the maple tree, and started to peck at the tree and got all the bugs out of him. The maple tree was so happy.

Everything was going along nicely for a long time, but all of a sudden there was very little rain. The earth got very dry, and all of the animals were getting very thirsty. The lakes and rivers were drying up and the animals did not know where to go.

"What will happen to us if there is no water to drink?" the animals said.

The maple tree heard them. "The animals helped me when I was suffering from the bugs. I want to help you now," the maple tree said. "Woodpecker – peck deep into my bark and then wait. Soon my sap will start running and you can drink my sap."

So the woodpecker tried it. And when he did it, a lot of sap flowed from the maple tree. And this gift saved all of the animals until the rains came and the water returned to the lakes and creeks.

It was from this gift – from the maple tree to the animals – that Anishinaabeg learned how to make maple syrup and how to tap maple trees when the sap runs.

Maple syrup was important, especially during the winter time, when there were no berries to pick and very little food.

That was the time when we really appreciated the gift of the maple tree.