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# For the Classroom

## Gluskabi and the Wind Eagle

— Retold by Holly Koteen-Soulé

*Gluskabi (or Glooscap) is a benevolent hero of the Wabenaki tribes of the Northeastern United States. Sometimes he plays the role of a transformer, changing monsters into harmless animals and adapting the landscape to be more favorable to the people. In this story he gets himself in and out of trouble in his attempt to understand the forces of nature. The children can readily relate to the story's juxtaposition of innocence and cleverness, and to Gluskabi's needing to find his own way, rather than taking the advice of his elder. This wonderful story was popularized by the Wabenaki storyteller and author, Joseph Bruchac.*

Grandmother of the Earth lived in a small lodge near a big lake, surrounded by mountains and trees, with her grandson Gluskabi. One morning, just as the sun was rising, Gluskabi went down to the lake. He pushed his canoe into the clear water and started to paddle out. He wanted to catch a fresh salmon for his grandmother.

He stopped the canoe and put out his fishing line. Suddenly, a great wind blew up and tipped his canoe over! Splash! Into the lake he went! Gluskabi climbed back into his canoe and started to fish again. The wind blew even harder. This time it blew his canoe back to the shore! With the wind howling all around him, Gluskabi went into the lodge.

Grandmother was by the fire, heating water for breakfast. She looked at Gluskabi's frown and asked him, "What is the matter, Gluskabi?"

"I am mad at the wind," said Gluskabi. "What makes the wind blow so hard, Grandmother?"

Grandmother Earth was very wise. She told him, "Far, far away, on the top of the highest mountain, lives the Wind Eagle, Wuchowsen. When he flaps his mighty wings, he makes the wind blow."

Where does the great eagle live?" asked Gluskabi.

"I will tell you, my grandson, for I know you will keep asking until I do. But I warn you, do not disturb the great eagle Wuchowsen. No good will come of it." Grandmother shook her head at Gluskabi, but went

on, "If you stand with the wind in your face, and walk and walk, always with the wind blowing in your face, you will come to Wuchowsen. It is a long journey and you must climb many steep mountains."

Gluskabi thanked his grandmother, walked outside, put his face to the wind and walked. He walked through the forest and across the valley. He walked up and down one mountain after another. The wind blew harder and harder, making it nearly impossible to walk. It blew off his cloak, but he kept on walking. It nearly blew him off the mountain, but he kept on walking.

On a peak ahead, he could see a great bird flapping his wings. He had found Wuchowsen, the Wind Eagle! Wuchowsen flapped his mighty wings so fast that it made the air roar. Gluskabi shouted at him, "Hello, Grandfather!"

Wuchowsen did not hear him.

"HELLO, GRANDFATHER!" shouted Gluskabi.

This time the Wind Eagle heard him, and he stopped flapping his wings. "Who calls me Grandfather?" he called out.

Gluskabi said to Wuchowsen, "It is I, Grandfather, I have walked a long way to thank you for making such good wind."

This pleased the Wind Eagle, so that he opened his wings and flapped them even harder. Gluskabi had to hold on to a tree or he would have been blown away!

"GRANDFATHER!" shouted Gluskabi. Again, the Wind Eagle stopped flapping. "Grandfather, you do such a good job making wind, but you would make even greater wind if you blew from that peak way over there."

The Wind Eagle looked at the far away peak and said, "It is too far to go. Even my mighty wings would be tired if I tried to fly there."

"I will help you," said Gluskabi. "Wait here."

Then Gluskabi gathered long sturdy branches and bound them together with strips of leather to make a carrying pack. He brought it to the Wind Eagle and



said, "Grandfather, lie down on this, and I will carry you to the far peak." Then he wrapped Wuchowsen onto the carrying pack with strong braids of leather. He carried the Wind Eagle on his back until he saw a strong tree growing out from a cliff. He hung Wuchowsen from the tree, upside down! Wuchowsen could not flap his wings; he could not move at all!

"Now I can go fishing!" said Gluskabi, and he journeyed home to his lake, leaving Wuchowsen hanging there! He walked up and down the mountains, and there was no wind. He walked across the valley,

and there was no wind. He walked through the forest, and still there was no wind. When he reached the lake, he pushed his canoe out in the water. The lake was still and clear. He paddled far out into the lake and put his fishing line in the water and waited. As he waited, it began to get hotter and hotter. He was very thirsty. The water became so dirty and thick with foam that he could hardly paddle.

He was not happy fishing in the lake, for it was too hot! He returned to shore and went into the lodge. He told his grandmother, "The air is so hot that I can

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hardly breathe. The lake is becoming dirty and the fish are suffering. I do not know what is wrong!”

Grandmother Earth knew what Gluskabi had done. She answered, “Because you tied up the Wind Eagle, Wuchowsen, we have no more wind. We need the wind to move the air and keep us cool. It brings the rain clouds so we have water to drink, and our plants can grow. Without wind, our life on earth will not be good.”

Gluskabi hung his head. He was so sorry for what he had done. He must hurry back to the mountain and set Wuchowsen free!

Gluskabi ran all the way to the high cliff where he had left the Wind Eagle. There he was, hanging upside down. How could Gluskabi set things right without the Wind Eagle being angry?

Gluskabi called to him, “Uncle, can I help you?”

Wuchowsen was so relieved to hear someone who could help him. “Yes, I was tricked by a boy who tied me to this carry pack. He left me here hanging upside down, and I could not help myself. Thank you, Nephew, I gladly accept your help.”

“I will pull you up away from the cliff, Uncle.” Gluskabi pulled and pulled until the Wind Eagle was safe on the ground, then he cut the leather straps and set the Eagle free.

Wuchowsen thanked his nephew, opened his great wings and flapped one tremendous flap!

Gluskabi said to Wuchowsen, ever so quietly, “Uncle, perhaps the wind can blow some of the time, and be still some of the time.”

Wuchowsen looked at Gluskabi for a long time, nodded his head and said, “Grandson, I understand.”

So it came to be that from that day on, the wind blows on earth some of the time, and then it rests. ♦

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#### Source:

This story is excerpted from the new WECAN collection *Truer Than True: A World of Fairy Tales for the Waldorf Kindergarten*, selected and edited by Holly Koteen-Soulé. Many versions of this story appear in print and online. Joseph Bruchac’s version, which inspired Holly’s adaptation, is in *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories* (Fulcrum Publishing 1997).

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