



**ELA Common Core Content Standards:**

Reading Standards for Literature 1, 2, 9  
Reading Standards: Foundational Skills 4  
Reading Standards: Informational Text 1, 5  
Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 2, 3  
Language Standards 1, 2, 4

**Estimated duration:** 1.5 hours in class. A number of extra hours may be needed for rehearsals and final performance, if desired.

**Goal:** Students will build upon the knowledge learned in GL3 Native Small Animals, and learn Karuk Oral tradition through one origin story that features rodents, and as a result of rehearsing an adapted play version, they will commit important formulaic Karuk language to memory. They will also learn terms associated with drama, and practice using these terms as they become familiar with stage direction and orientation as they read (and act!) the screenplay.

**Teacher Background:** The Karuk way of life is known to us through [píkva](#) (origin stories) that have been told and re-told, heard and re-heard for countless generations. Listening to the stories together, we again re-imagine “the times before” human existence, “when the animals, plants, rocks were people.” These First People are called the [ikxaréeyav](#)<sup>1</sup> (or often in English, “Spirit People”). The stories are dramatic retellings of the ancient actions and interactions of these First Peoples.

The Karuk, like most indigenous peoples, traditionally only tell stories when it is cold enough for snow to be in the high mountains. So, while this lesson should be taught during these months, remember that if you chose to perform this play, you will need to have the students learn this play early on in the school year in order to be able to perform it before the last snow melts from those highest peaks. Please respect this tribal code.

These First People understood their responsibility to figure out how the yet-to-come humans should live.<sup>2</sup> Hearing the stories, we learn that they fulfilled that responsibility through repeated sequences of contemplation, discussion, inspiration, and both collaborative and random experimentation. As human re-hearers, we inherit the same ancient responsibilities of the First People, each of us in our own way trying to figure out “how people should be living.” We also inherit their time-proven methods of proceeding as well.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced like “ik- ha-RAY-yav” with the “h” in the second syllable gargled like the Spanish “j” and the final “v” sounding something between the English pronunciation of “v” and “w.” See Karuk Pronunciation Guide.

<sup>2</sup> This figuring of the [ikxareeyavs](#) has been called “laying down the world.”

Rehearing the stories, the lives of the First People function as thought-templates for the listeners, as examples (both good and bad) of how to think about our place and our conduct in the world. Káruk multi-species storytelling provides us with a shared imagined background for understanding complex relationships between ourselves and the many other creatures with which we still live today.

Origin Stories usually carry a great deal of cultural weight, sometimes melodramatically so. But many of the stories bear that weight lightly with the help of ironic humor.

The story in this lesson has been adapted into a screenplay featuring about five small animals; and while it is an origin story and teaches some simple lessons about their characteristics and traits, it is also told for its humorous quality. While the screenplay can be read solely in the English language, integrating parts of all of the Karuk language lines will augment the educational and socialization value of the lesson significantly.

Research shows that Native language is fundamental to “the sense of well-being of Native children, and in turn, to their academic performance, self-esteem, and ability to succeed in a complex world.”<sup>3</sup> Current studies show that when a school values and utilizes the Native language of the target audience in the curriculum, participating Native students exhibit higher self-esteem, less anxiety, and greater self-efficacy (Hakuta 2001). Furthermore, their resiliency to addiction, risky behaviors, and positive health and well-being is nurtured (Goodkind et al. 2011, Mmari, Blum & Teufel-Shone 2010). The inclusion of Native language and culture in school curriculum is also an important factor in Native American children’s retention rates and school attendance (McCarty & Lee 2014; Mmari, Blum & Teufel-Shone 2010).

The survival and flourishing of American Indian Peoples depends on their ability to know, retain, make use of, and pass on their special connections with their homelands. Traditions, origin stories, and prayers that provide a sense of tribal uniqueness and identity originate in special places, from land-related incidents or from natural gifts of the land. Additionally, Tribal nations were, and to differing extents, still are supported and sustained by their lands.

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<sup>3</sup> Benefits of Indigenous language learning. University of Oregon. [http://pages.uoregon.edu/nwili/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/forwebpageBenefitsL2\\_ECE10\\_17\\_14.pdf](http://pages.uoregon.edu/nwili/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/forwebpageBenefitsL2_ECE10_17_14.pdf)

<b>Theme/Big Idea:</b>	Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge complement each other.
<b>Big Questions:</b>	What are some of the many Native species of rodents and small mammals that inhabit Karuk Ancestral Territory? What role do they play in the Native Food System? How are they featured in Karuk Oral Tradition?
<b>Vocabulary:</b>	Backstage, Center stage, Costume, Cue, Director, Downstage, Lines, Offstage, Pantomime, Playwright, Props (Properties), Role, Script, Set, Stage Left, Stage Left, Stage Manager, Upstage

**Materials:**

**Drama Vocabulary** (included)

**Áxpu’um – Vole**, screenplay by Lisa Hillman, adapted from Karuk story told by Georgia Orcutt, published in J.P. Harrington’s *Karok Myths* (1940), retranslated into Karuk by Violet Super and Jim Ferrara (2002), edited Karuk text by Alvis Johnson and Charron Davis, 2016 (included)

Materials to create stage set, costumes, and stage props (not included)

**Preparation:** Copy **Drama Vocabulary** and the screenplay, **Áxpu’um – Vole**, for each student.

**Discussion:** Explain briefly what we mean by “oral traditions” – e.g., a system for preserving a group's beliefs, customs, and history, in which members of the group tell their children about them, and the children tell their children, and so on.

Explain that because Native Americans did not have a written language, there is no written history of the Native Americans. The record of Native American life comes to us in a large part through the writings of historians and anthropologists, but it can also be traced through the so-called oral traditions of each tribe. These are perhaps most important to Native Peoples, as they teach their origins, ways of life and beliefs from their own perspectives. A traditional Karuk origin story, like many other traditional Native American stories, is only told in the winter. In our area, this means that these stories are told when it is cold enough for snow to be in the high mountains.

Like most cultures, the Karuk have a number of very important stages in their lives that are uniquely celebrated: a birth, a grave illness suffered by a child, the first annual run of the spring salmon, marriage, death, and what is known as a “coming of age.” Ask students if they know what this means. You might need to explain that when a girl or a boy matures to becoming women and men, many cultures hold a “coming of age” ceremony to honor them. Ask them if they know of any “coming of age” ceremonies that are held for boys or for girls.

**Preparing to Read:** Tell students that the play they will be reading was adapted from a 2002 Karuk translation of a story told by Georgia Orcutt in 1940. The story is a humorous story about some very small animals, all of them girls, who are getting ready for a Flower Dance, called **Íhuk**

in Karuk. The dance is held in the springtime, and is considered a “coming of age” ceremony held for girls who have become young women. You might explain that when a girl or a boy matures to becoming women and men, many cultures hold a “coming of age” ceremony to honor them. Ask them if they know of any other ceremonies. You might tell them that in former times, when boys were considered to have “come of age,” they moved out of the **ikrívraam** (the Karuk word for “living house” where women and children generally slept) and into the **ikmaháchraam** (the Karuk word for “sweathouse”), where the men generally slept.

Explain to them that this story was written down in English, and that many people work on translating the text back into Karuk, including the linguist Jim Ferrara and the Karuk Speakers Alvis Johnson, Charron Davis, and Violet Super. Today, they will be reading a screenplay that is adapted from this original text. Reading a screenplay is a little different than reading another type of story, and that there is vocabulary that is specific to this form of oral tradition: drama.

**Vocabulary:** For this portion of the lesson, you may either teach the vocabulary explicitly, or refer to the **Drama Vocabulary** as the terms come up while reading the screenplay.

**Reading:** Assign students roles, and have one person read the stage directions (italicized). At this time, you may wish to read only the English version of the play, which is located on the right side of the pages. When the vocabulary specific to drama is mentioned, have the students try to guess what these terms mean. Refer then to the words in the **Drama Vocabulary** for clarification as needed.

**Discussion:** You may choose to prompt discussion of the story with some of the following suggestions:

- Discuss the use of theater elements in a live play versus a movie/television production
- Develop a sense of audience (i.e., who does this content appeal to?)
- Discuss thoughts, opinions, and ideas evoked by the text.
- Discuss what makes a performance a work of art. (process and or product)
- Describe what the story meant to the students and have them explain their personal preference and emotional response, asking: “What did you like about it?” “What did it mean to you?”
- Have students apply the story to their own lives, perhaps by asking: “What did you learn from this performance?”

**Optional Activities:** Have student design masks and costumes for the characters. Have them draw a map of the stage, labeling it with Drama Vocabulary. Have students research what a traditional living house looked like and have them draw a stage set.

Invite a Karuk Language speaker to help students practice saying the Karuk text, or use the sound file located on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade supplementary CD to help students practice pronunciation, and rehearse the play with as much of the Karuk text as possible for an incredibly enriching school performance.

**References:**

Goodkind, J., K. Ross-Toledo, S. John, J.L. Hall, L. Ross, L. Freeland, E. Coletta, & T. Becenti-Fundark. (2011) "Rebuilding trust: A Community, multiagency, state and university partnership to improve behavioral health care for American Indian youth, their families and communities." *Journal of Community Psychology* 39, pp. 452-477.

Hakuta, K. (2001) Testimony to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. "The Education of Language Minority Students."

McCarty, T. L. & Lee, T.S. (2014) "Critical Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy and Indigenous Education Sovereignty." *Harvard Educational Review* 84, pp. 101-124.

Mmari, K. N., R. Blum & N. Teufel-Shone. (2009) "What increases risk and protection for delinquent behaviors among American Indian Youth?" *Youth and Society* 41, pp. 382-413.

**See Also:** California State Board of Education. (2009) World Language Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve, retrieved 03.10.2016 at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/worldlanguage2009.pdf>

## Drama Vocabulary

<b>Backstage</b>	Stage area behind the front curtain.
<b>Center stage</b>	Center of the stage.
<b>Costume</b>	Clothing, masks and ornaments worn by an actor.
<b>Cue</b>	A signal for action. For example, one actor provides the “cue” for another actor to speak a line. Also, a stage manager can “cue” for a curtain to close.
<b>Director</b>	The person who is in charge of the whole production, including rehearsals and supervising the actors in the preparation of their parts.
<b>Downstage</b>	Front of the stage toward the audience.
<b>Lines</b>	Words that are designated to a specific character, to be said by an actor.
<b>Offstage</b>	Areas of the stage which are not in view of the audience.
<b>Pantomime</b>	When the actor relates something through body movement and facial expression, without the use of their voice.
<b>Playwright</b>	The author of a play.
<b>Props (Properties)</b>	Objects that are used by performers onstage or are necessary to complete a set, like a basket, or some acorns.
<b>Role</b>	A character played by an actor.
<b>Script</b>	Text of a play, which consists of dialogue, stage directions, and descriptions of characters.
<b>Set</b>	Scenery for a scene or an entire production.
<b>Stage Left</b>	The left side of the stage from the perspective of the actor, facing the audience.
<b>Stage Right</b>	The right side of the stage from the perspective of the actor, facing the audience.

**Stage Manager** The Stage Manager coordinates and oversees aspects of rehearsal and the performance that help facilitate the overall success of the play.

**Upstage** Back of the stage away from the audience.

## ***Áxpu'um – Vole***

Screenplay by Lisa Hillman, adapted from Karuk story told by Georgia Orcutt, published in J.P. Harrington's Karok Myths (1940), retranslated into Karuk by Violet Super and Jim Ferrara (2002),  
edited Karuk text by Alvis Johnson and Charron Davis, 2016

**CURTAIN:** *The background scene of the stage shows a living house with a door that leads back stage (an ikrívraam with a hole for a door). In the background there is the river and some trees.*

*Stage center, both **HOUSE MICE** and **VOLES** are pounding acorns together and pantomiming chatter so that the audience cannot hear what they are saying. Depending on the number of students wishing to partake in play, the director may choose to have each role doubled, and have the actors speaking the Karuk and the English texts dress exactly the same or the English speaker to be dressed in black with some identifying features with the Karuk role so as not to create confusion. The English speaker will mime the actions of the Karuk speaker, speak their translated texts **AFTER** the Karuk speakers, and stand just behind their counterpart. Another option is to have Narrator 2 translate the Karuk after the original text, as indicated in the screenplay.*

**HOUSE MICE** and **VOLES** have a mortar and pestle, and both are using a hopper to catch the acorns. They are wearing bark skirts and simple skin-colored t-shirts, and their hair is tied loosely with pieces of leather at their backs. From time to time they brush the pounded acorns into a basket. During this time, the two **NARRATORS** simultaneously enter stage left (**NARRATOR 2**) and stage right (**NARRATOR 1**) and position themselves at both sides of the backdrop. The **STAGE MANAGER** enters stage left shortly afterward, and positions self behind **NARRATOR 2**, who is standing stage left.

**NARRATOR 1:** Ayukii, pananu'áraara

**NARRATOR 2:** Welcome, and hello friends. The story you are about to hear is a traditional Karuk story, which is considered non-fiction – that means they are true stories. Listening to these stories carries certain responsibilities pertaining to you: As soon as you hear the invocation, which signals the beginning of the story, you must remain absolutely quiet and stop fiddling around until the story closes. Our **STAGE MANAGER** (points to **STAGE MANAGER**, who waves to the audience) will help you respect these

time-honored traditions. We hope that you enjoy our play, called *Áxpu'um*, which means Vole.

**NARRATOR 1**: uknîi.

**STAGE MANAGER** *signals audience to remain quiet, perhaps with a sign that says "Quiet, please!"*

Áxpuum uppiip,

**NARRATOR 2**: And so it is. Vole says:

**VOLES** and **HOUSE MICE** *now laugh loudly, as if they had just talked about something very funny. Then VOLE says suddenly:*

**ÁXPU'UN**: takun'ihukva.

**VOLE**: They are having a Flower Dance.

**VOLES** and **HOUSE MICE** *jump up and put their tools away in front of the house. They pantomime chatter, and the HOUSE MICE reach into the hole to retrieve the basket with their make-up. They begin to paint themselves, giggling and making faces, and then go back to gather their baskets and exit the stage with them via the hole, pantomiming joyful chatter while the NARRATORS speak.*

**NARRATOR 1**: xás kunpâanva  
káru vúra kunyáffussi'ip  
xás uumkun kun'ihare'esh

**NARRATOR 2**: So then they put on make-up,  
and they dress up,  
then they will go to dance.

*Both VOLES and HOUSE MICE enter the stage when they are ready from backstage through the door, both now dressed up in regalia and with their hair tied with mink.*

**NARRATOR 1**: síit káru vúra áxpu'um  
xákkaan takun'íinvuti.

**NARRATOR 2**: Mouse and Vole live together.

**NARRATOR 1**: áxpu'um pamúyuup kunish vaa  
tûupichas.

**NARRATOR 2**: Vole has small eyes.

**VOLES** *exaggerate their small eyes to audience.*

**NARRATOR 1**: síit múyupkáamati.

**NARRATOR 2**: Mouse has BIG eyes.

**HOUSE MICE** *exaggerate their big eyes to audience.*

**NARRATOR 1**: áxxaak payeenipaxvúhich.

**NARRATOR 2**: They're both girls.

*Both HOUSE MICE smile broadly, and then help each other adjust dresses while NARRATORS speak.*

**NARRATOR 1**: patookáriha kunipyaffussí'ip.

**NARRATOR 2**: And then after a while, they



were ready and all dressed up.

**NARRATOR 1:** kári xás áxpu'um uppiip:

**NARRATOR 2:** And then Vole said:

**ÁXPU'UM:** hûut paneemúshahiti?

**VOLE:** How do I look?

**MICE** feign niceness coupled with pity.

**SÍIT:** vúr iim yâamach peemússahiti,  
kúna vúra pamíyuup uum nîinamichum.

**HOUSE MOUSE:** You look pretty,  
but your eyes are just too small.

**HOUSE MICE** and **STAGE MANAGER** shake their heads sadly, with sneaky smiles on their faces.

**STAGE MANAGER** holds up a sign with a picture of a face with small eyes.

**SÍIT:** víri vaa kumá'ii asiktavaankêemich.

**HOUSE MOUSE:** So that's why you are a  
homely woman.

**VOLES** look downcast as they touch their eyelids in dismay. **HOUSE MICE** face audience smilingly.

**NARRATOR 1:** xás síit uppiip:

**NARRATOR 2:** And then House Mouse says:

**SÍIT:** hûut paneemúshahiti?

**HOUSE MOUSE:** How do I look?

**VOLES** react with feigned awe.

**ÁXPU'UM:** iim uum vúra yav peemússahiti,  
iim uum vúra yâamach,  
iim uum puxích yâamach káru.

**VOLE:** YOU look good,  
You are pretty,  
you are VERY pretty, too,

**VOLES** now both shake their heads in unison, and say sorrowfully:

kúnish kúna vúra pamíyuup uum kêechas káru. but your eyes are sort of too big, too.

**STAGE MANAGER** holds up a sign with a picture of a face with small eyes.

**SÍIT** and **HOUSE MOUSE** are shocked; slowly they look downcast as they touch their eyelids.

**SHREWS, MOLES, and WOODRATS** skip onto the stage. They are excited about the Flower Dance (*íhuk*) and don't recognize the sullen disposition of both **HOUSE MICE** and **VOLES**. These try to hide their displeasure and pretend to admire their dresses and necklaces; they touch their hair and they all pantomime chatter so that the audience cannot hear them while both **NARRATORS** speak. **SHREWS** work their way to front center stage, appear a little nervous and shy while **MOLES** and **VOLES** fuss over them.

**NARRATOR 1:** kári xás mun'apmanxánnahich uum  
toopkáriha.

**NARRATOR 2:** And then Shrew is ready [to  
go].

xás uppiip:

Then she says:

**MUN'APMANXÁNNAHICH:** hûut paneemúshahiti?

**SHREW:** How do I look?

**HOUSE MICE and VOLES** move upstage to look discerningly at **SHREWS** while **NARRATORS** speak.

**NARRATOR 1:** xás takunpiip:

**NARRATOR 2:** Then they say:

**ÁXPU'UM** káru **SÍIT:**

**VOLE and HOUSE MOUSE:**

iim vura yâamach peemúshahiti,

YOU are good-looking,

**HOUSE MICE and VOLES** nod their heads in appreciation, but then shake their heads and say, while the **STAGE MANAGER** holds up a sign with a picture of a face with a long mouth:

kúnish vaa pami'ápmaan uum vâaram.

but your mouth is long.

**SHREWS** are not surprised, and walk a little ways stage left as they look downcast and touch their long noses. **MOLES** take center stage and **HOUSE MICE and VOLES** switch their attention to them, smoothing their skirts and hair while **NARRATORS** speak.

**NARRATOR 1:** xás pamúr uppiip:

**NARRATOR 2:** Then the Mole says:

**MÚR:** hûut paneemúshahiti?

**MOLE:** How do I look?

**HOUSE MICE and VOLES** look at each other and raise their eyebrows behind **MOLES'** backs, and then when **MOLES** look at them, they change their expressions and nod their heads in appreciation.

**ÁXPU'UM** káru **SÍIT:**

**VOLE and HOUSE MOUSE:**

iim vúra yâamach kuma asiktáva'an,  
iim uum yâamach peemússahiti káru,

You are a nice-looking woman,  
you are looking good, too,

**HOUSE MICE and VOLES** then shake their heads, then crimp up their arms, wave their hands and say, while the **STAGE MANAGER** holds up a sign with a picture of a face and body with short arms:

kúna vúra pamíttra'ax uum ipshûun káru.

but your arms is just too short.

iim uum púffaata pamíttra'ax

Your arms are just gone –

kúnish pamítitiik uum.

only your hands [are left].

**MOLES** look dismayed and wave their little arms nervously as they run with tiny steps stage right.

The **WOODRATS** push their way sneakily to center stage, looking left and right suspiciously. **HOUSE MICE** and **VOLES** clutch their necklaces protectively, and **MOLES** and **SHREWS** crowd up next to them on either side. They look warily at **WOODRATS** who appear to eye their valuables greedily while **NARRATORS** speak:

**NARRATOR 1:** achnáat uppiip:

**NARRATOR 2:** Woodrat says:

**ACHNÁAT:** hûut paneemúsahiti?

**WOODRAT:** How do I look?

**MOLES** nod slowly at **WOODRATS**, not entirely truthful and clutching their necklaces suspiciously.

**MUR:** iim uum yâamach peemúsahiti...

**MOLE:** You are nice-looking...

**SHREWS** nod in the same manner, looking warily at **WOODRATS**, who are now smiling arrogantly.

**MUN'APMANXÁNNAHICH:** iim uum yâamach pasiktávan,

**SHREW:** You are a pretty woman,

Now **SHREWS** and **MOLES** look at each other, shake their heads slowly in unison and say:

**MUN'APMANXÁNNAHICH** káru **MUR:**  
kúna vúra puxákaanhe'esh vura.

**SHREW** and **MOLE:**  
but you cannot go along with us.

**WOODRATS** raise their arms in anger, shake their fists and make towards rushing the other girls. **SHREWS**, **MOLES**, **HOUSE MICE** and **VOLES** crowd together to fight off **WOODRATS**, who finally back away meanly. **STAGE MANAGER** points towards **WOODRATS** as the others all, with the exception of **WOODRAT** and **NARRATORS**, say in unison:

kúnish vúra uum isiitvê'esh!

You might just steal something!

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**NARRATOR 1:** kupánnakanakana.

As soon as this word is said, all actors freeze until the final prayer is over. **STAGE MANAGER** holds up a sign that says "End of Story," then holds up another one that says, "Now you can fiddle around," then holds up another that says, "But please remain quiet for the closing prayer." **NARRATORS** mime actions that reflect what they are saying, such as beckoning with their hands to the Spring Salmon, straightening up when they talk about their backs being straight, and beckoning again to the blossoming Indian potatoes.

**NARRATOR 1:** chéemyaach ík vúra ishyâat,

**NARRATOR 2:** Hurry upriverward, Spring

imshírihraavish.

Salmon, you must shine.

nanivásih vúr ikiniyâach.

My back is straight.

Chéemyaach ík vúr ataychùkkinach,  
i'unnúpraaveesh.

Hurry, young Indian potato bulb,  
you must sprout up early.

**NARRATORS** walk downstage center and join hands, bow, and then take a step backward. Next, the **STAGE MANAGER** will downstage upstage center, bow, and take a step backward to join hands with the **NARRATORS**. If there is a **BACKSTAGE MANAGER**, this person will enter the stage with a sign that identifies him or her, walk downstage center, bow, and then take a step backward to join the line on the other side, opposite **STAGE MANAGER**. Next, **HOUSE MICE** join hands and skip downstage center, bow, then let go of their hands and step back to join on either side of the line. **VOLES**, then **SHREWS**, then **MOLES**, and finally **WOODRATS** copy these motions to make one single line (if possible) on the stage. One final bow in unison will end the play.

**CURTAIN.**