

Sunshine Stones



My father grew up at the base of Mount Emily in the Grande Ronde valley; his father's farm was right below the highest point of the six thousand-foot peak. The place was very special for my granddad and my dad; they had both grown up on the small farm and had hunted on the slopes of the mountain. When my father was an old man we were visiting at his home when he told me this story.

Near the top of Kimoteen, which we call Mount Emily is a place called Sunshine Lake. It used to be a lake, but it isn't much of one anymore. Over the years it has mostly filled in. It's on pretty unstable ground; in fact, at the head of the canyon is Slide Creek, so named because of the frequent rock slides. In my father's day, the lake provided a cool resting place. In his father's day, the lake was even larger and provided a place for school picnics. I don't know when the lake first appeared, but I have heard how it happened.

Jesse Hulse

A long time ago there was a group of Indian women and girls on the mountain gathering huckleberries. Some of the young girls got bored with the work and began to explore. The Great Spirit noticed and was not pleased with their lack of attentiveness to their duty. Suddenly they became excited. They had found sunshine stones. They may have been gold nuggets or perhaps some precious stones, but the girls became obsessed with them and began gathering them rather than food. Their desire for the sunshine stones began to consume them and take even the thought of their duties from their minds. To end this madness, the Great Spirit slid part of the mountain over them, covering the girls with earth and leaving a large crater above them. Over time the crater filled with water from the creek and became a lake. It became a beautiful place, but it was also a sad reminder of the Great Spirit's lesson that we should not forsake our duty to our people, our families, or even to ourselves, to seek trinkets.