



TSAGAGLALAL

"SHE WHO WATCHES"

The story of Tsagaglatal, based on Wishram oral tradition

Back when the world was young, there was a woman named Tsagaglatal (suh-GOG-la-lal) who was the chief of all who lived in this region. This was at a time when the animals lived, spoke, and acted like humans and the humans were not yet real. When it was time for the world to change, Coyote came to this place and asked the inhabitants if they were living well or ill. Each in turn sent him to Chief Tsagaglatal, who lived up on the basalt cliffs overlooking her village and the river. From there she watched the village and all its happenings.

Coyote climbed up to the house on the rocks and asked Tsagaglatal, "What kind of life do you give these people? Do you treat them well or are you one of those evil women?"

"I am teaching them to live well and build good houses," Tsagaglatal responded.

To see the true nature of her heart, Coyote asked Tsagaglatal what her greatest wish would be.

"I desire to be able to watch over my people forever," she said.

"Soon the world will change and women will no longer be chiefs," responded Coyote. But being the trickster that he was, Coyote found a way to grant her desire by changing her into a rock. He then promised Tsagaglatal: "You shall stay here and watch over the people and the river forever."

Tsagaglatal still watches over her people, eternally gazing on the source of their health—the Columbia River—with her large watchful eyes.



The combination petroglyph/pictograph "She Who Watches" is found in Columbia Hills State Park near Dallesport, Washington. Access is limited to protect against vandalism. Park rangers conduct guided hikes to the site.