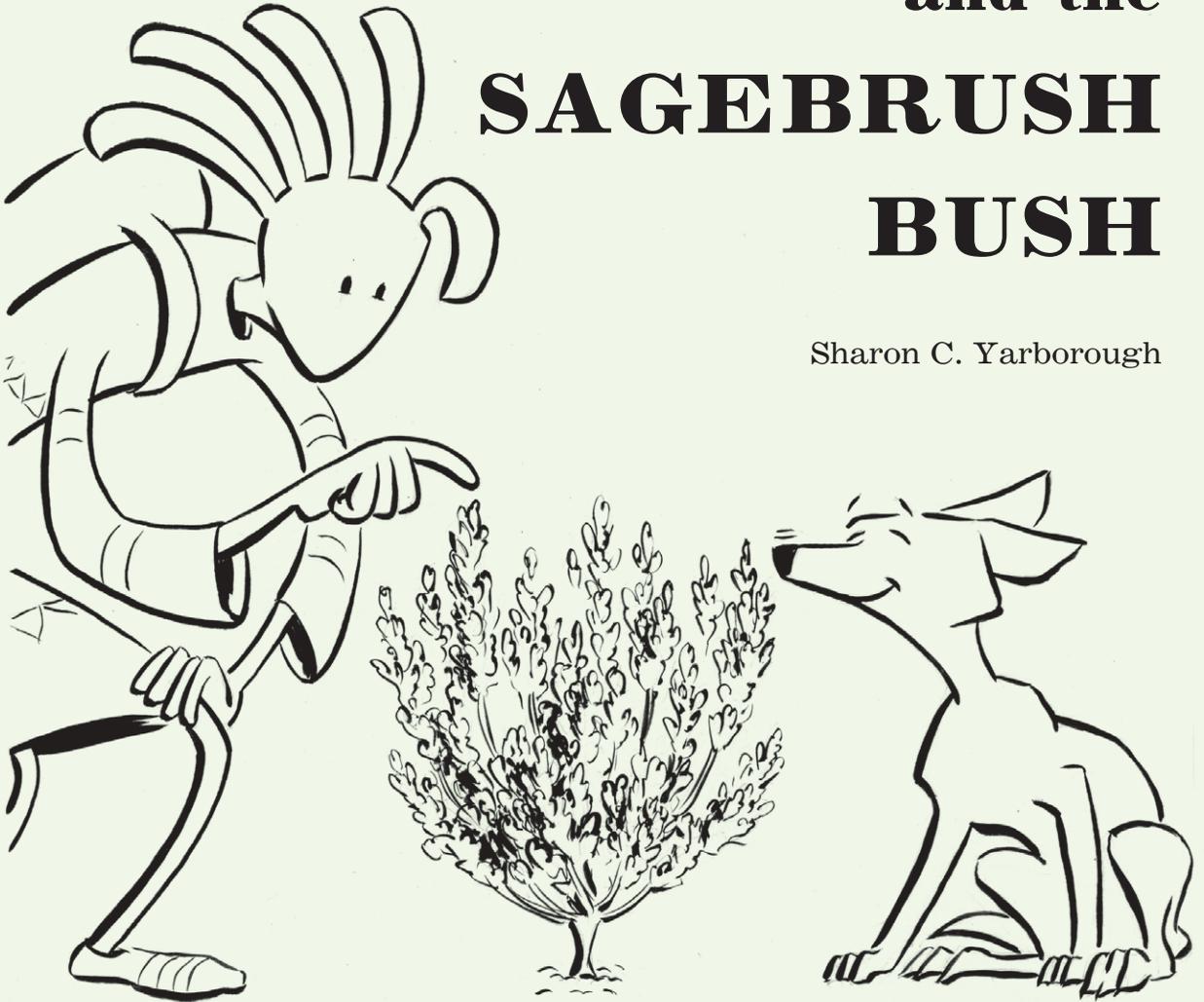


**COYOTE,
KOKOPELLI
and the
SAGEBRUSH
BUSH**

Sharon C. Yarborough



with illustrations by Chris Ruggia
botanical illustration by Ellen C. Ruggia

To Aunt Charlotte
– S.C.Y.

To Rachel Voorhees & Hazel Ruggia
– C.R.

Kokopelli is a mythic figure shown in 2,000 year old rock art pictures throughout the southwest. He is a flute playing musician who carries the seeds for growing plants and animals in a pack on his back. His appeal has a timeless quality and you can find his image used frequently in art, craft and commerce today.

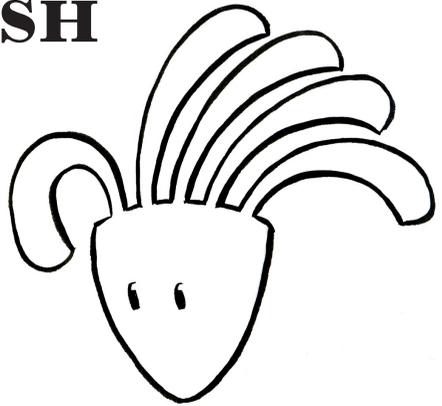
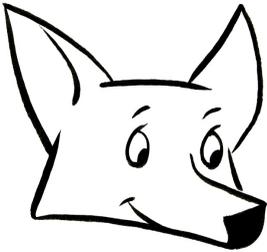
This story isn't intended to represent actual folklore of any native people. It is just an imaginary tale about animals and Sagebrush made into a coloring book. You can color the animals in their actual colors or, because it is a fantasy, you can use any imaginative colors you desire.

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Comics by Chris Ruggia and botanical drawings by
Ellen C. Ruggia can be found at www.vastgraphics.com.

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ONE DAY Coyote and Jackrabbit were watching Kokopelli grow plants. Kokopelli would take a seed from the pack on his back and carefully poke a hole in the earth. Then he would drop in the seed and cover it with dirt. A little cloud would form over where the seed was planted and drops of rain would fall down and water the seed. After that the sun would come out and beam its warm rays down.

Then Kokopelli would play a beautiful tune on his flute and after a while the tiny seed would send roots down into the soil and leaves up into the sunlight and a plant would grow.



Sometimes the plant would have pretty bright yellow sunflowers. Sometimes the plant would make delicious corn or melons or beans or squash—yummy things to eat.

When he saw this, Coyote got very excited. He said to Jackrabbit, “I want to plant seeds. I want to grow plants. I want to grow yummy things to eat.”

Jackrabbit scratched his head with his long hind foot and said, “Oh, Coyote. Remember what always happens when you try to help someone do something. I really don’t think you should do this.”

But Coyote would not listen to Jackrabbit. He wanted to grow plants very, very badly.



So he called to Kokopelli, “Please, please, please let me grow plants too. I really, really, really want to and I’ll be very, very careful and do just what you say. I promise.”

Coyote begged and he pleaded and Kokopelli, against his better judgement said, “Well, alright. I just have just a few seeds left and you can plant them if you are very, very careful and follow my instructions. I have to go home to my dinner anyway.”

Coyote said, “Oh, yes. I will, I will, I will be very, very, very careful and do it just right. Just like you tell me.”





So Kokopelli showed Coyote how to dig the hole for the seed, put the seed into the hole and then cover it up. How to call the little rain cloud and then ask the sun to shine down. How to play the flute and wait patiently for the seed to come up and become a flower or fruit or vegetable.

Coyote was so proud. He was going to grow plants. Kokopelli went home to his dinner leaving Coyote with three seeds to plant. Surely Coyote couldn't do too much damage with just three seeds.



Coyote dug a hole and dropped in a seed. He covered it up very carefully and asked the cloud to come and water the seed. Then he asked the sun to shine down and help the seed to grow. But when he picked up the flute to play a growing tune to the little seed. . . Oh, dear! Coyote forgot that he didn't know how to play the flute at all. He did the best he could but the squeaks and squawks he made were so bad that they gave Jackrabbit a headache and he left.

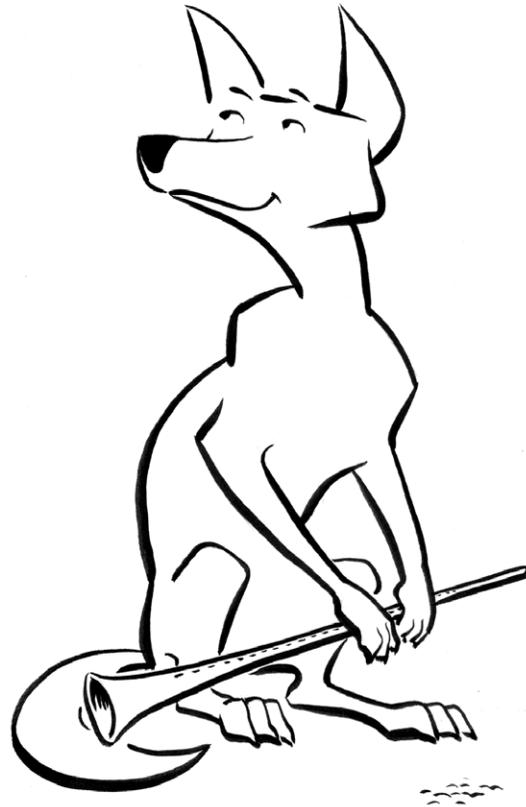


Coyote was still squeaking and squawking on the flute when Horned Toad came by. He had earmuffs on. “What is that awful noise? Who is making that terrible racket? Oh, It’s you Coyote. I might have known. What do you think you are doing with that flute?”

Coyote proudly said, “I’m making plants grow just like Kokopelli. See, look here.” And he reached down with his paw and uncovered the seed for Horned Toad to see.

“Silly Coyote”, said Horned Toad. “You dug up the seed before it sprouted. Now it won’t grow. You never do anything right.” And he scurried away shaking his head.





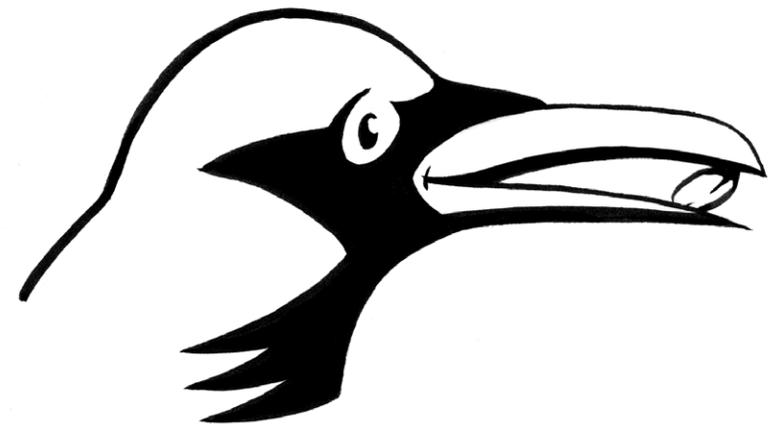
“Oh well”, said Coyote, “ I’ll just plant another seed.” And he did. He poked a hole in the ground, dropped in the seed, covered it up, asked the rain cloud to come and the sun to shine. He was just getting ready to play his squeaky, squawky Coyote song when his friend Crow flew up.

Crow landed, shook out his shiny black feathers and asked, “Whatchoodoin’ Coyote, Whatchoodoin’?”

Coyote said, “I’m growing plants from seeds like Kokopelli. Yummy plants like corn, beans and squash.”

But all crow heard was “seed” and “yummy”.

“Thanks, Coyote”, he said as he poked his beak into the hole and gobbled up the seed. “I was ready for a snack”.



“Oh well,” thought Coyote as Crow flew off. “I still have one more seed.” So Coyote, once again, poked the hole for the seed, covered it up, asked the rain cloud to come water the seed and the sun to shine down. and he played his squeaky, squawky Coyote flute song.

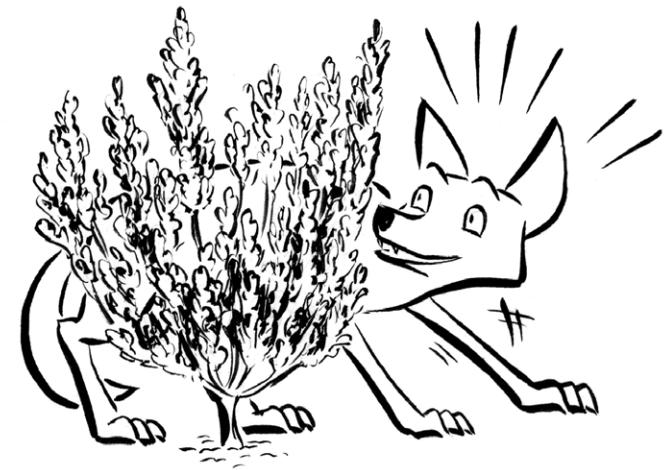
Coyote played on the flute for a long time and the squeaks and squawks did get a little bit better. Just as he was getting really impatient and tired too, two tiny fuzzy grey leaves poked up through the dirt.

He was so proud! He grew a plant! Would it be a beautiful sunflower? Would it make yummy food like corn or melon or beans or squash? He couldn't wait to see. He didn't even want to go home to his comfortable bed. He wanted to stay by his plant and protect it, so he curled up carefully around the little new plant to sleep the night.



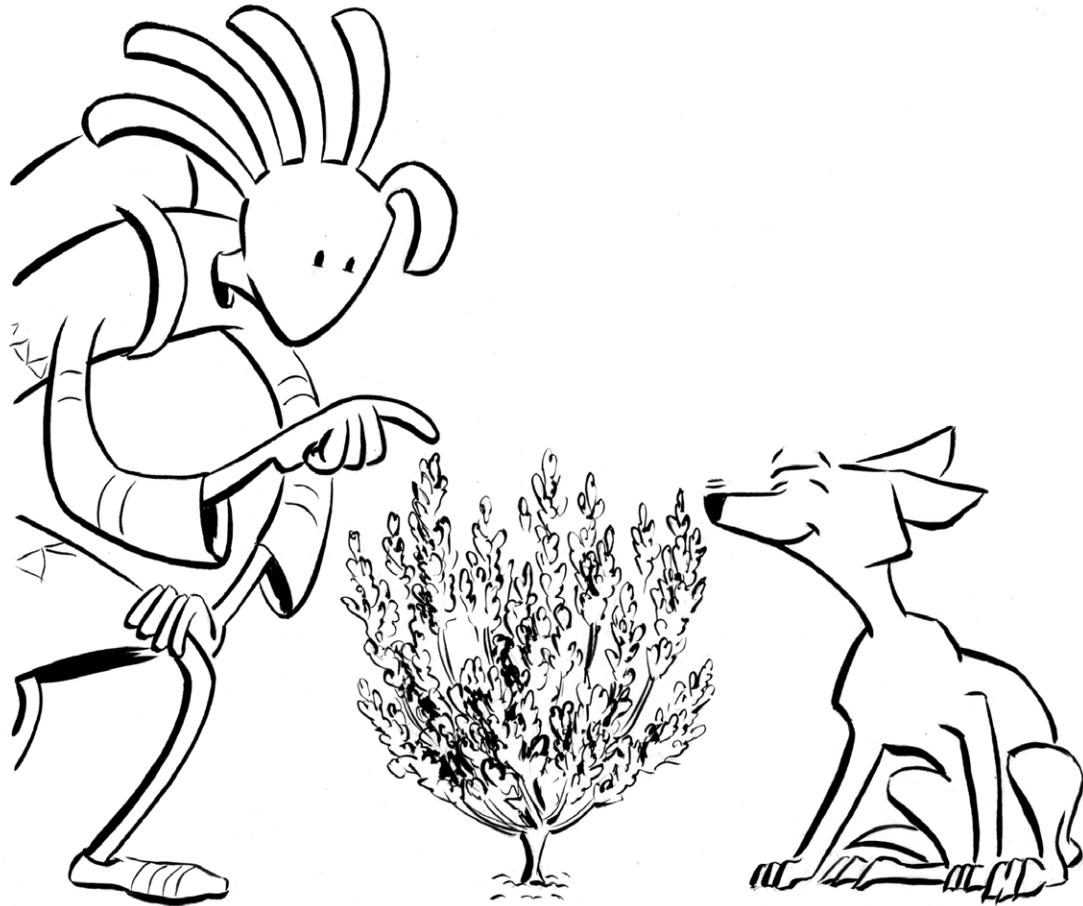
In the morning when he woke up the first thing he saw was his plant. It had grown in the night. He could see that it wasn't a sunflower. It wasn't corn or melons or beans or squash either. It was a bush with small silvery-green leaves covered with felty fur. The leaves had three little lobes at the tips and when Coyote touched them they smelled wonderful to him with a pungent resin smell, a perfect Coyote smell he thought.

Coyote was so very proud. He had really, really grown a plant. It was different than the plants he had seen Kokopelli grow. It had been grown with Coyote's own special squeaky, squawky flute song. And it suited him perfectly.

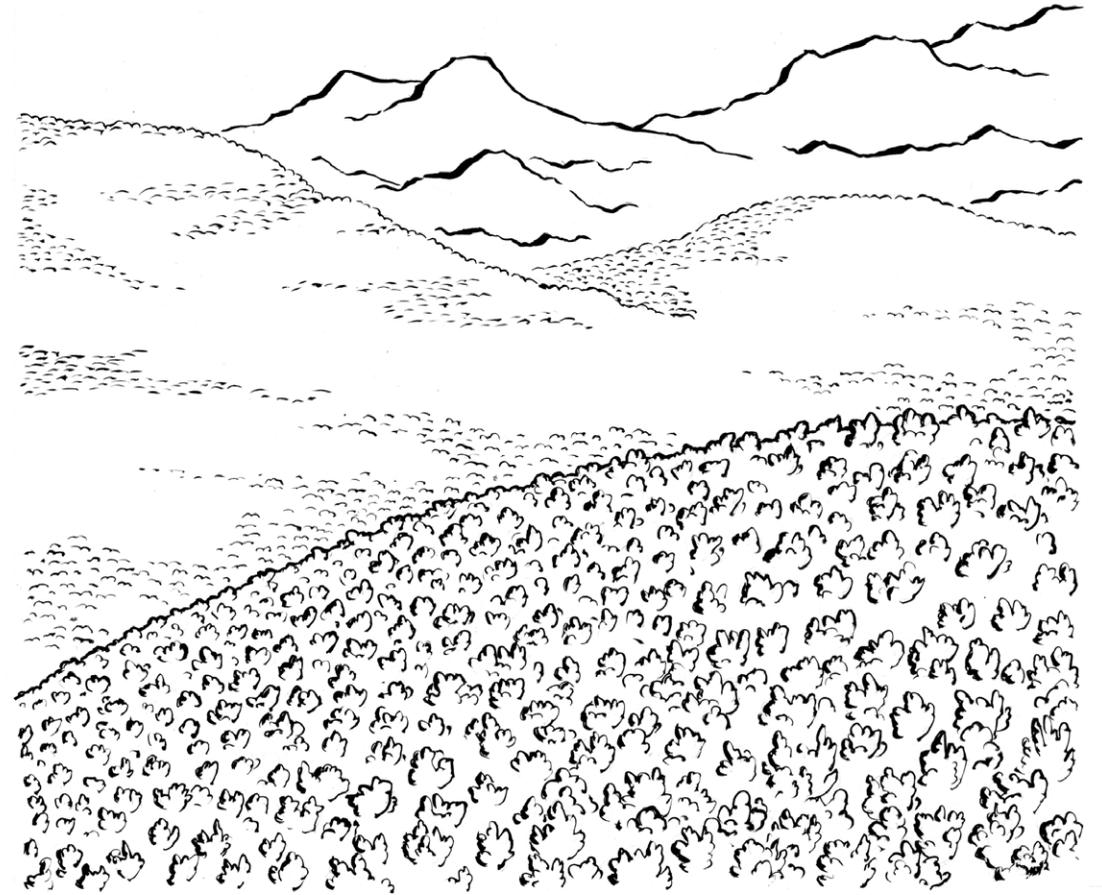


Later, when Kokopelli came to see how Coyote was doing growing plants he found Coyote sitting by his bush admiring it. ‘Coyote, what is this?’ asked Kokopelli. ‘What have you grown here, Coyote?’

Coyote said, ‘It’s my special Coyote bush. Look it’s all brushy like my tail, it has soft silky fur just like me. It smells wonderful too; kind of like the sage seasoning my mama puts in stew.’



‘Well,’ said Kokopelli. ‘Let’s call it Sagebrush then and it can be your very own special plant.’ Coyote was so excited that he gathered lots of seeds from his Sagebrush bush and started planting them everywhere. That’s why we have so much Sagebrush in Nevada.



SAGEBRUSH

Big Sagebrush, *Artemisia tridentata* • The State Flower of Nevada

Sagebrush grows in the Intermountain Region between the Rocky Mountains in the east and the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the west. There is more Sagebrush in North America than any other shrub and it covers about 470,000 square miles across 11 western states. Sagebrush thrives in many different habitats in this sunny, dry area of little moisture.

Would you be surprised to know that Sagebrush is in the Sunflower Family (Asteraceae, Aster-ace-see-ee)? It doesn't look like many sunflowers because it belongs to the wormwood tribe (Anthemidae, Ann-thih-mid-eh-ee) where the flowers are very small and pollinated by the wind.

The scientific name of Sagebrush is *Artemisia tridentata* (Ar-tuh-mee-see-uh tr-eye-den-tah-tah). The name *Artemisia* is for Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting and wild nature and *tridentata* is for the three teeth on the leaf tips.

The woody stems and branches tell us that Sagebrush is a shrub. The plants usually grow from 1 to 12 feet tall and have rounded, irregularly shaped tops. The small, wedge-shaped leaves with three-teeth at the tips are covered with silver-gray, oil-

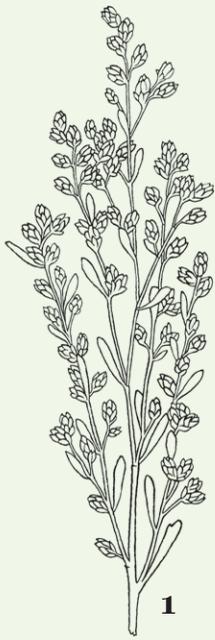
filled hairs that protect the plant from moisture loss and extreme weather conditions as well as giving its special fragrance. The small flowers of Sagebrush grow in long clusters and bloom in the fall. Plants usually live to be 40 to 50 years old but some reach 100 and more years.

Sagebrush has two kinds of roots; a long tap root that can reach 20 feet and more down to find deep water and other roots that are near the surface and collect water from rain and snow. Sagebrush does not root sprout after a fire and has to grow again from seeds.

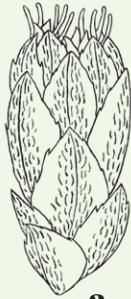
The leaves stay on the plant all winter and can make food even at near freezing temperatures. These leaves are very good food for some animals like pronghorn antelope, pygmy rabbits and sage grouse but not good for cattle or horses to eat. Many animals make Sagebrush their home raising their young among the sheltering bushes.

The Native Americans who lived in Sagebrush areas used the plants for a lot of things such as medicine, fuel, clothing, crafts and ceremony.

Sagebrush, which tastes nasty, is not the sage used for cooking.



1



2



3



4

Big Sagebrush

Artemisia tridentata

- 1 Inflorescence
- 2 Flower head (10x actual size)
- 3 Single flower (10x actual size)
- 4 Leaf (3x actual size)

