

The Sleeping Giant



The books in our *"Carry on Reading in Dementia"* series are designed based on the research of Dr. Alan B. Stevens and Dr. Cameron Camp and his colleagues at the Myers Research Institute (MRI), in Cleveland, OH. The focus of these books is on stories that are interesting, enjoyable and accessible for individuals with memory deficits. An important feature of our books is the size and type of the font, and the layout of the material, which is developed and tested in individual or group activity settings. The end result is an activity where participants enjoy the experience of reading interesting books and sharing memories related to the content. You will be amazed at the discussion and the reminiscing that is generated. A number of books have been created for the "Carry on Reading in Dementia" series, and these are available at www.dementiability.com.

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The Sleeping Giant

This is a story about the land formation on an island along the shores of Thunder Bay Ontario. The island holds the shape of a sleeping giant. This story is about the legend of the “Sleeping Giant”. It has been written by Dolores Dickey, from Thunder Bay, Ontario.

A stony giant sleeps forever on a rocky cliff above the cold clear waters of Lake Superior. He's quiet now, with arms crossed on his chest and legs stretched out towards Thunder Cape. But there is a tale, from long ago, that tells how he raged across the lake, whipping the waves to foam. His voice was the roar of thunder.

Wise men tell of Nanna-bijou, the thunder giant, who lived in ancient times and cast his spell over the Great Lake. When he was angry he borrowed the power of the Thunder God to create a storm over and around the lake.

The people feared the lightning bolts he threw and the booming thunder of his laughter. He did not care. Scaring people amused him. He dared one and all to stop his noisy temper tantrums.

A brave young native warrior, the leader of his people, took up that frightening challenge. With prayers on his lips and gifts in his hands he climbed through the clouds to kneel before the gods. He pleaded for the chance to battle this noisy monster, face to face, and win peace for his outraged people.

What could this warrior offer the giant in return for the right to save his people? What would the gods demand? No price would be too high; his people had suffered enough.

The gods, in thoughtful silence, listened to his plea; even the God of Thunder admired his quiet courage. The gods agreed to his request, but warned him that should he lose the battle, his life would be the price he paid, and the bully would roar in triumph.

The warrior leader dressed for battle. He carried his sacred symbols and the best of his hunting weapons. He asked his people to pray for him as he climbed the misty mountain to face his frowning foe.

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The struggle was fierce, the warrior brave, but the giant who lived in the thunder had strength beyond that of the bravest man. He shouted his victory and threw a flaming thunderbolt.

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But the people were frightened no longer. There was no way that this battle was fair. They took strength from their leader's brave struggle and demanded that justice be done. The giant should rage no more.

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Their bold young leader had dared powers greater than himself to win their freedom. Was that not enough? There was no greater sacrifice. He had dared to challenge Nanna-bijou to give his people peace.

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The gods consulted with respect for the people's boldness. How should they treat these people who had never before shown such fearless determination? Should they honour the brave young chieftain? Should they discipline their thundering giant and force him to make peace?

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Before the sun had set the gods announced that the people were right. The battle had not been fair and the giant should rage no more. Instead, the gods commanded that he was to rest, forever asleep, on the towering cliffs by the icy, blue lake.

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There he has slept ever since. He never stirs - and yet, when the wind howls and the rain pours down, his legacy of thunder and lightning bespeaks his former anger.

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To this day, he is an amazing sight, clearly visible across the harbour from the city of Thunder Bay.

Sometimes he is highlighted by sun and shadow, but he can also be wrapped in ribbons of mist, or covered by a blanket of snow.

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The Sleeping Giant is always majestic. He will remind us forever that this ancient tale of a bad-tempered giant ended in the victory of love and courage over injustice and fear. Long may the giant sleep.

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Adapted from the 1908 poem
“THE SLEEPING GIANT OF
THUNDER BAY” by Nicholas
Jeddorre - available from the
special collection in the
Thunder Bay Public Library.

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