TSONOQUA-CANNIBAL WOMAN

Who was Tsonoqua?

* Tsonoqua was a half-mad cannibal woman who hunts for naughty or careless children to eat.
* When she caught them she would carry them off in an enormous back basket.
* She is the bogey woman of the Northwest Coast
* She was used as a threat for misbehaving children.
* She was not very smart and her prey usually escaped.
* She was greatly feared by children.

What nations had stories about Tsonoqua?

* Many nations had stories about Tsonoqua including the Kwak’waka’wakwa,

the Haisla, and many nations along the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Is she known by any other names?

* Tsonoqua is also known by names such as Dzunukwa (Wild Woman),

and Tsonokwa.

What are some characteristics associated with her?

* Tsonoqua had bright red big pooched lips.
* She was ugly.
* Her features were very sculptured and deep.
* Some stories say she was a giant.
* She is usually naked and black (as soot) in colour.
* She has long pendulous breasts.
* She had bedraggled hair.
* She had very bad eyesight and could be easily avoided because she

could barely see.

* She was drowsy and dimwitted.
* She has deep set eyes which are rimmed with red.
* She has grabbing eyes.
* She smelled awful.

Did she have any special abilities?

* Tsonoqua was believed to be able to bring herself back from the dead

and regenerate wounds.

* She controls the magical Water of Life, and clumsill spills it around.

What were the purpose of her stories in their cultures?

* Her stories were used to make children behave.
* Her stories were used to show obsessive desires like greed or the hunger felt for children by Tsonoqua are not a laughing matter.

What are some other interesting facts about Tsonoqua?

* In one of the stories about her she was jealous of the beauty of a local

young woman and befriended her because she knew she could never

be so beautiful.

* She ran through the woods crying “hoo hoo” when she hunted for naughty

children which sounded like the wind blowing or whistling through the trees.

* Most children managed to escape from her in the stories that were told.
* Many masks of here had the dark look of a death mask, alive and horrifying.
* One of the myths about Tsonoqua is related to how mosquitos were created.
* She is rich and many try to steal from her, but their quest for wealth

 and power leads to unhappiness.

* Parents used the Tsonoqua story as a warning to keep their children

safe and discourage them from venturing too far into the forest by telling

them she might eat them.

* Many artists have created masks about Tsonoqua to share her stories.

What are some cultural traditions related to Tsonoqua?

* At the end of some potlatch ceremonies the host chief wears a mask of Dzunukwa

which is a sign the ceremony is over.

* During the Winter Ceremony (Hamatsa) Tsonoqua is represented by an oversized

mask worn by a master dancer who moves clumsily to represent the monster’s confusion.

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