

Myths might be related to earthquakes

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Researchers say northwestern Native American myths of two-headed serpents and epic battles between Thunderbird and Whale are rooted in seismic history.

The research by a University of Washington scientist indicates such stories might relate to a large Seattle earthquake around A.D. 900 and specific eyewitness accounts of a mammoth 1700 earthquake and tsunami in the Cascadia subduction zone.

Ruth Ludwin, a UW research scientist in Earth and space sciences, was lead author of two recent papers detailing evidence gleaned from native lore. She said the same event might have been depicted differently in varying places, depending on local effects and cultural differences.

She noted references to Thunderbird and Whale, or similar figures related in lore to wind or thunder and water, are found in Native American stories of shaking and flooding that were collected all along the coastline.

"It appears these stories have to do with earthquake-, tsunami- and landslide-like events," Ludwin reported. The research appears in *Seismological Research Letters*.

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