

Juleen Trisko

# Touching Spirit Bear

Totem Project 2015



In the book *Touching Spirit Bear*, Cole Matthews, a troubled teen full of anger, is sent to live alone for one year on an island to discover how he can make restitution for all the harm he has caused people. Part of his banishment includes carving a totem that reflects his feelings, his healing and his forgiveness. The group that sent him there, called Justice Circle, believes Cole needs to learn to take responsibility for his actions, to forgive others and himself, and to help someone else.

An elder named Edwin shows Cole that carving what he sees and thinks about can help him in this process. Cole carved an eagle, a wolf, a raven, a seal, a beaver, a spirit bear, a rain drop, a lightning bolt, a seagull, and a circle. If I were to carve a totem, I would include a squirrel, a dragonfly, a pineapple and a circle.



## The Squirrel

I have always liked squirrels

but I never stopped to wonder why. I find them fun to watch. They are always in a hurry, springing from place to place, and racing around trees. I see them as busy and yet having fun. Elaborate bird feeders don't stop them from getting to the seeds they want. They aren't afraid to take risks and they will try again every time. I like to think I am the same.

## The Dragonfly

The dragonfly is a symbol for wisdom and change. While they are flying, they can change directions almost instantaneously. All dragonflies have transparent, light wings. They are noted for their beauty. They hover around you, but they don't bite like horseflies or mosquitos do. I like this symbol of change and the idea of gaining wisdom. One can get close to dragonflies to admire them without the fear of getting stung. I try to live my life this way also.



## The Pineapple

The pineapple is a symbol of hospitality. I know that Mrs. Chester Congdon had its image carved into the wooden decor of the Glensheen mansion in Duluth as a symbol of welcome. I, too, welcome people to come over to visit. I want people to feel free to stop by my house any time and know that they will be welcomed in and served some tea.



Juleen Trisko  
Reading Class  
Totem Project

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