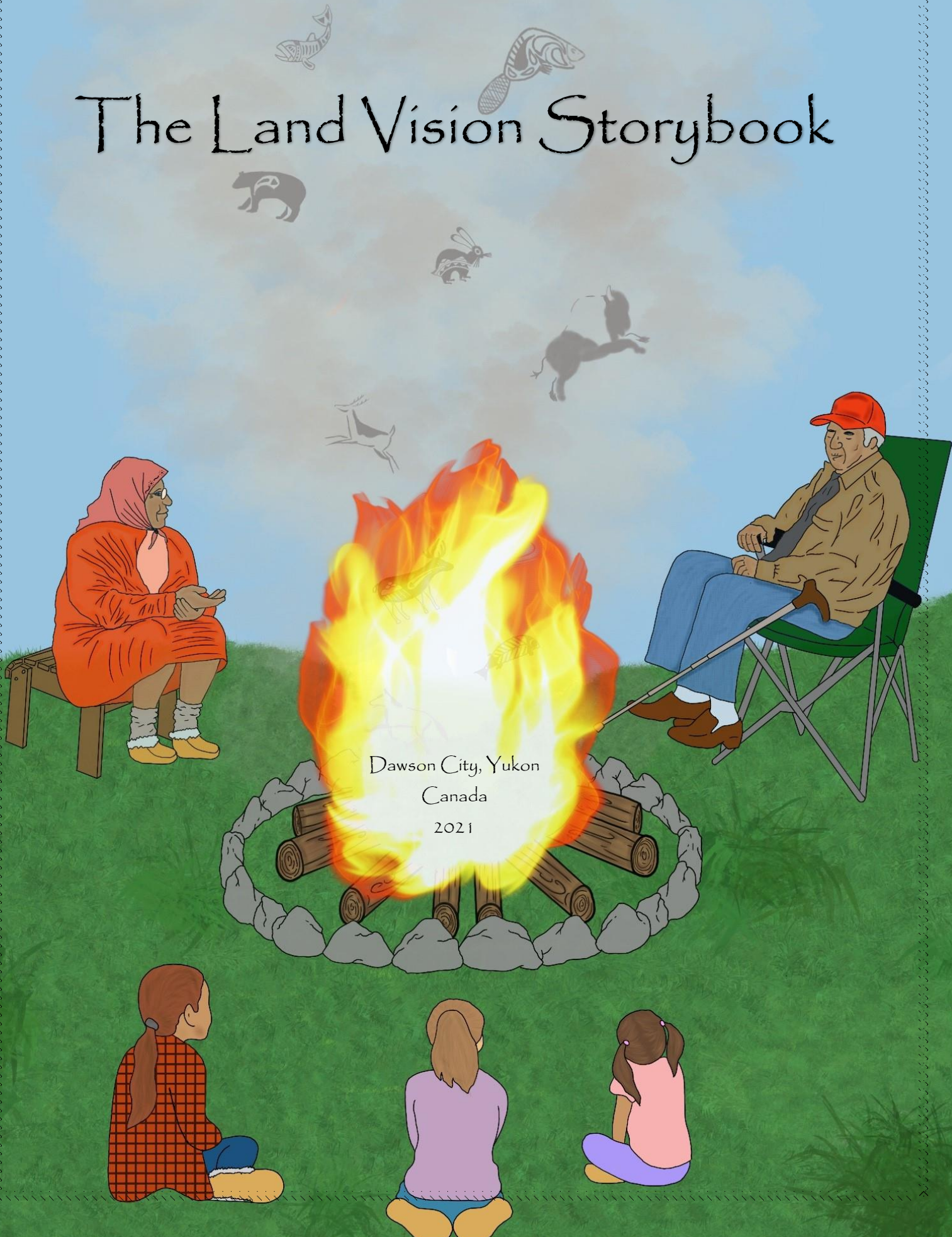


The Land Vision Storybook



Dawson City, Yukon
Canada
2021

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This book was compiled by the Implementation Department, with assistance from the Heritage Department at Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government in Dawson City, Yukon.

Introduction

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to research and compile some of the ancient traditional stories and folklore of my ancestors and the ancestors of other First Nations in the North. It has been a journey of exploration and excitement, mixed with some sadness and loss. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library and the Dawson City Community Library has a wide variety of materials available, though one can only imagine that much of our people's songs, stories, and history have been lost due to colonization.

Now, however, is a time for our stories to be reborn! To revitalize our stories and the cultural lessons our ancestors passed down to us through them, we have put together a collection from around Northern Canada to give to our Citizens. The stories come from various books, transcripts and biographies from around the area.

- Mercedes Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Citizen

In the time long ago, the traditional stories of the North would always be told in their entirety and in a specific order. The stories create a world, the world of our beginnings as Indigenous people of the North. While we Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in go through the process of story revitalization, however, we think it is important that our Citizens feel comfortable to chart their own story-course, and not to feel worried that they are doing things “wrong.” It was also understood in the time long ago that no story should be started while another one is being told: we can only build on where we have been. During the process of story revitalization, we must start where are at. For many of us, that is at the beginning. So read the stories, explore the stories, add to the stories and feel confident that the stories want you to engage with them.

In this collection, it felt important that we provide stories for our Citizens from as many different knowledge holders as possible. We have also included several versions of the same story to show you that as the storytellers vary, the stories change. This is because the stories were shared orally, with the characters and scenes of the stories getting entangled in the mind of the storyteller. The result is a wonderful quilt of knowledge woven together by the voices of our ancestors.

This book includes many stories about The Traveler, who was known by many names such as Tsà' Wëzhaa, Tsà' Wëzhè, Beaver Man, Smart Man, Tsäk-ge-jëk, Tachokaii, K'etetaalkkaanee, Yamoría, Yobaghu-Talyonunh, Cha'kwa za, Gey dee ye dee and Esuya' in to name a few. These stories were the longest that were told, and would have originally been told in order, over several month's time. The Traveler went into the world to make it safe for us, making agreements with the land and animals that we are expected, even now, to uphold.

In addition to Traveler stories, we have included stories of creation, Crow stories, fun & spooky stories, and stories originating from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory. We encourage you to read the stories aloud with your family or friends. We encourage you to mix and match stories and let them grow and live within you. We encourage you to tell the stories around the campfire and in your homes. Our stories are ready to thrive again through you!

Mähsj cho

A special Mähsj cho to our Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizen illustrators:

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Funding for the Land Vision Storybook was provided by the Wilburforce and 4SSS Foundations through the Land Stewardship Framework- Mähsj cho!



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CREATION STORIES



Figure 2- Salmon- Created by Darcy McDiarmid

Creation of the World¹

As told by Medicine Man Luke, interpreted by Arthur

Long time ago the water flowed all over the world. There was one family and they made a big raft. They got all kinds of animals on the raft. There was no land, but all water, and they wanted to make a world. The man of the family tied a rope around a beaver and sent him down to find the bottom, but the beaver didn't reach bottom; he got only half way and drowned. The man then tied a string around a muskrat and sent him down; he reached bottom and got a little mud on his hands, but he drowned. The man took the mud out of the muskrat's hands and into his palm and let it dry, then crumbled it to dust. This he blew out all over the waters and it made the world.

¹ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Trans.) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Animal Mother²

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith

This story happened a long time ago. Goat was the only animal in this country. Goat and buffalo. That's all people live on. Pretty hard. No rabbits, nothing.

One man had two wives, two sisters. That oldest one is named Nakayh. She's got some kind of doctor, some potion. They're going to starve, you know. He hunt porcupine, that man. When he finds fat one, porcupine mother, he don't bring it. He cook it, he keep it somewhere. Just porcupine daddy, that's the one he bring home.

"You don't get porcupine Mamma?" they tell him.

"No, that's the one I get, just in a tree, porcupine daddy."

Well no fat, you know, that one. His wives go. They keep wondering all the time where they get game, you know. They keep going.

He says, "She eat him, that porcupine mother. I'm going to fix her this time. Don't look when she comes back, just look around that way."

"All right."

Hit him it. He got porcupine mother, he got porcupine daddy too. That daddy, he's going to pack for his wives. This one, the mother, he's going to eat himself. He cook it. Cook quick, throw head, throw in fire, want to eat quick. She's just fat, you know. He pick up head, want to chew tongue, face it toward him. He bite her. (Claps) She bite his mouth shut. So he can't eat. Well she's cooked now. He put it in packsack, porcupine daddy too, go back to camp.

They made camp already, his wife.

She's going to have baby, that oldest one, Nokayh.

He comes back, grunt, mouth shut by porcupine. His wife work on fire, that youngest one.

"What's the matter?" she said. She helps him make that porcupine head fall down.

"I starve, that's why I cook that head, but he bite me," he said.

"You do that all the time. You never do that just first time, this time. You think I don't know?" that oldest one tell him.

He don't say nothing. Anyway he take out that cooked one, porcupine. They eat him.

"I want to eat because I starve, that's why I cook him."

"No, you do that all time." Those women know.

² Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers.) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

She's getting big now, that woman, can't walk, you know. She tells her sister, "I'm not going to walk no more. You fellows make some kind of place for me."

Her husband cut big tree, get wood. Big pile of wood. Her sister work. They fix big house, they said, big place.

"I'm not going to be your wife anymore. Going to be something wrong with me. But you people, you're going to eat lots now. I'm going to be different. I'm going to get game to eat. I'm going to have baby. Going to be something wrong," she tell them.

She tells her sister, "Get sinew, fix snare." She fixes it for her. That's rabbit snare she make. "Knock down tree, for him to eat." She's got no baby yet, but she teach that one, her sister. Fix snares good.

They're gone then. They got to move on, can't stay in one place. That younger sister and her husband move on.

"You come and see me when she feel like it. I can't stop now. I'm going to have grub all the time, me."

That time that husband go, somebody give her box. I don't know who is that somebody. "That's your grub box," he tell her. Little goat inside, he stand up. "Don't kill him though. Just one side you cut him. Cook one side. Then you close him, put him back."

"All right." When she want to eat, it's simple, open that box, cut one side, he don't move, that little goat. Cut one side, cook him, close him. Eat good. She start to get sick now. Her sister (had) made her big blanket, sew for her, give it to her. She put it on top grass. Put up sticks to hold it. Underneath just some kind of grass.

That's where her babies born. Rabbits born first. Then ptarmigan. Then grouse. Everyone she give clothes when they're gone. Next caribou. Next sheep. She talk to them. She give them grub, everyone and say, "This one you're going to eat." She tell them all. She give. They chew. "This going to be your grub."

Then grizzly. Then wolf. She's got nothing for them. Don't know what they're going to eat.

She said, "That's all right you fellows treat your brothers just like game. But I don't want you to have teeth." She tried to take off his teeth. "Don't fight. Don't fight people."

Grizzly gets mad at his Momma, and take off. "I'll keep it to fight." He's dangerous.

"Don't fight people," she tell him.

Moose last one born. He's got teeth just like grizzly. "NO, you're not going to fight with people," she tell him. "I make you for this ground. For people." His mamma take off those people. "You don't try to fight people."

Then that sister and her husband come back. She shows them what she made.

Rabbit had little horn, that time, just like sheep. "You can't snare that rabbit that way," her sister tell her.

"All right, I'm going to take off," she said. She take off those horns. That's why rabbits now had no horn.

Now everybody eat it. Rabbit got strong skin that time, just like mink. But people use it too much. That's why that mother get jealous about that. So she take feathers and blow them on rabbit. That's why that skin no good. People used too much of it. Now nobody use rabbit skin except sometime for net blanket.

Yes, that time when they come back lots of moose, lots of caribou, lots of ptarmigan, lots of grouse. All full now. Indians going to eat lots. That's how they get their grub.

"You fellows leave for good now. I'm going to leave this ground, going to watch my kids, going to watch my kids."

All right. They move. They got lots to eat now. People got lots to eat. Animals got lots to eat.

After that sister and husband left for good, that's the time she made that swing, over Bennett Lake.

Another man from Tagish saw all this. He's hunting on that mountain behind Choutla School. Look around. He sees that mother sit there, big moose skin swing. She sing for her kids. They jump on that skin.

Moose come first, sings, "What kind of skin you fellows got. Don't you see how big is me?" He steps right through that skin and she has to get another. Put up another skin.

Then wolf. His mother said he got to sing by himself, wolf.

"He's going to be mean to us. We're not going to help him sing," they say that, that game.

So he sing himself, that wolf. He's going to go alone, that wolf, going to be good hunter.

Everyone got song on that swing. Grizzly bear, he try to sing, he fall down. That's why he's so clumsy. "Just like that, you go now you," she tell him. That's why he's clumsy.

That game mother made all those animals the way they are. That's a true story.

That man who watch them, he tells those people at Tagish what he saw. He told them there's going to be two winters (joined together). "Try the best you can, you people."

Dezadeash froze to bottom, they say. Everything froze. Talk about ducks! Swans, froze. Grizzly froze. They say one woman who had no husband but had three kids, she pick up animals that froze, pull them out, save herself.

To get fish they say, people make ladder down through ice. My daddy's mother told me about that. They stay in Haines. Lots of grub there. Salt water...

Long time after, in my mother's daddy's time, man saw Game Mother. This is just a little while ago, in shotgun time.

My momma's daddy knew this man. He throw away game for nothing. Shoot game, just throw away. He doe this all time. One time moose come to him, pick him up on horns. He drop his shotgun

right then. That moose carry him away, he can even sleep right there on those horns. He carry him across lake, across to other side.

Game Mother³

As told by Angela Sidney

Here she started to grow, bigger and bigger and bigger like that.
And she wouldn't go anyplace, wouldn't travel around.
She was just so big.

Springtime, that's the time when animals are born.
She told her husbands,
"It's no use [waiting] because I'm no good to you people.
You'd better go on your own.
Just leave me right here.
But make a better house camp for me."
That's what she told them.
"If you want to, you can watch me from a long was away, from on top of the mountain."

Anyway, they left.
They hated to go, but they had to go anyway.
They watched, I guess, all the time.
I wonder what kind of field glasses they got, eh?

The first thing they know, moose was born.
As soon as those husbands go, those animals came out!
Moose had grizzly teeth too, they say.
She called it back and she took those teeth out.
She showed moose what to eat—willow.
Bull Moose came with a horn.
"Leave your horn once in a while," she told him.
"Don't use it all of the time, just in running season."
Then she told moose to lick salt in her ashes.
That's why they lick mud all the time, looking for salt.
They call it moose lick.

Caribou came next—first bull and then cow.
Bull caribou came with horns too, so she told him the same thing.
"Leave your horns once in a while.



³ Cruikshank, J. (1991). *Reading Voices: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.

Don't use them all the time, just in running season.
Just then you use it," she told them.
And she taught them to eat moss.

Next sheep came, and she taught him to eat grass.

Then came a grizzly—she tried to call him back to take his teeth out,
But he wouldn't come.
She couldn't get it!

"I'm going to use these teeth to get even," he told her
"You're taking everything from us."

"Well, don't be mean to people," she told him.
"Remember that you came from people."

How Indians Got Fire⁴

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith

Crow was the one who first got fire. You know that chicken hawk? He got long nose, first time, they say

Crow got King Salmon. He can't eat it without fire, you know. Someplace he see fire come out salt water. He don't know how to get it. How he know fire, Crow? He don't know which way he's going to get it. Somebody's got to get it, he think. That time he tell birds, "You think we get it, that fire?"

"NO."

Chicken hawk, he got long nose, "I'll try," he say. Crow get pitch from wood, tie up his beak for him. "Try now." He wait for that fire going to come out. Soon it come up. He poke it with his beak. He start to burn now that beak. Chicken hawk beat it home. "My nose start to burn," he scream.

Chicken hawk, he got long nose, "I'll try," he say.

Crow get pitch from wood, tie up his beak for him. "Try now."

He wait for that fire going to come out. Soon it come up. He poke it with his beak. He start to burn now that beak. Chicken hawk beat it home. "My nose start to burn," he scream.

⁴ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

"You're doing good," call Crow

Just on shore he fall down. But he got it already, that Crow. That Chicken hawk pretty sick though.

"Come on," Crow tell him. "I'm going to medicine you." He fix him up little beak. "Just nice looking boy, you now," he say. "Women going to like you now."

They cook now that fish. Put away tail so it won't make foolish people. Everybody eat that fish now.

They build fire and from there Crow take rock, flint. He throw it all around. That's why you sometimes find that rock all around.



The Camp Robber⁵

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

When all the animals were men the camp robber was a medicine man. One time the people had nothing to eat, and they asked the medicine man to get them some food. For six nights a different man each night dreamed to find a way to get something to eat.

The camp robber was the last and sixth man. He dreamed and called all the people together to bring their snares with them. He made a pack of the snares and put them on his back. The people mad e the snow in a big heap. Around this he went, chanting and saying, "bye and bye meat will come."

Then he reached into the snow heap and pulled a caribou head out by the horns. He did not kill it, for it was not a real caribou; only a spirit. So he painted the horns and tail red, red with ochre, and let it back into the snow heap.

Next day they got lots of caribou, and the one with red horns and tail was amongst them. That is why an Indian never kills a camp robber when he steals grub, but lets him go because he helped them in the days when he was a medicine man.

⁵ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

The First Potlach⁶

As told by Mrs. Rachel Dawson

The first potlatch started with Crow girl down in Haines. She find little worm out in the woods and she keep it, and it grow. She nurse it too, they say, with her breast. And it grow big. And pretty soon it was dangerous. It started to be big and danger when she's- going to let it go. She talk to it too and it understand her. She always go down there in the house (where she keep it) and it started to smell funny.

So her brother said, "Gee people start to notice our house. Every time my sister open the cellar it start to smell awful. She don't let nobody go down there too. Smell bad."

That snake, I guess he pee too, just like people.

"Every time she open cellar door I always notice it and she close it quick." When she go down there he listen to it. And she talk, she talk to herself down there. Then he said to his five brothers, "She must got something down there. A person can't be like that I can't go down to the cellar talk to myself for a long time."

His older brother said, "Why can't we fool her, let her go away someplace?"

"She never go away," they say. "She stay home all time."

She watch that snake, see. One day her younger brother say, "Tomorrow you go down there, see grandma! See if she want anything done."

Her grandmother was sewing gopher skin. Must be from Yukon I guess. This happen down in Haines, Alaska, this story. Her stitches are fine too. Got to be just fine when you sew gopher skin, so it don't pull apart. So she's doing that, helping her grandmother.

"Here, I can't see," she said, "I'll take it home with me," she tell her grandma. Her grandma say, "No, I got to guide you. I want it done well, I don't want it done just any way."

So she want to go home, she want to go home. Her grandma said, "What you got at home anyway? You never come see me or never do anything around here for me for a long time. What happen to you?"

She said, "Nothing. I just don't want to go round," she said.

While she sew that thing, the boys look down (the cellar) and they see two shiny things down there with two eyes you know. Snake eye! So, they go down there and they look at it. It move around so they get ready.

"I'm going to let it out," he say.

⁶ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

That youngest brother he say, "You stand this side, you stand here." The cellar open and it crawl up. As soon as he get there they make stick like that (forked) and they poke his neck. His older brother kill it. That thing scream -- it make funny noise - it scream, they say. She hear it, that girl.

"Oh," she said, "my son, ah hyeet" She run home and sure enough, he come out of the cellar and he's dead. She go on top of him and she hold him, she cry.

Then she said, "You people, you take first button blanket you got around here. You wrap it up good. You make a box for it, put in there and you bury it good." She said, "The reason why I raise this thing is because when somebody go to Inside"-- they call it inside here, this Yukon -- "when somebody go inside they never come back. They always get killed, something like that. They said lot of our friends got killed. They never come back. So I raise this thing. I talk to him. He know you people were his uncle. I know because when I go down to se him he understand me." She cry. She said, "I want you people to make potlatch for him."

That's how potlatch started, you see, first time. That Indian lady, Crow lady, first started.

"You invite all the Wolf people," she said, "and you make party for him." So they did. And that song she made, that's the one those Indians all sing. They didn't sing it last night. They should sing too, but they didn't.

"I hear my son, I hear my son cry." She finish that song like that, and every time she think about him, I guess, she sing that song. W hen they make party she sing it and she say, "All you Crow people, Wolf people, you got to use that song." That's what she tell them after.

The Marten⁷

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur



The marten has a white or reddish bridge across his breast. Whenever he was in an Indian camp and they were sitting around the fire eating he always looked hungry and watched everyone eat, looking greedily for something for himself.

One Indian didn't like being ogled, and threw a chunk of king salmon crease which struck him on the breast and made his bridge-mark.

The Origin of the Wind⁸

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

⁷ Osgood, C. (1971). *The Han Indians*. New Haven: Department of Anthropology Yale University.

⁸ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

A long time ago, when all animals were men, there was no wind. There was a bear that used to go about with a bag on his back. Many people were curious to know what was in the bag and they often asked the bear, but he would not tell them. One day another man caught the bear asleep with the bag on his back. The man's curiosity to know what was in the bag was so great that he cut it open. The bag contained the wind, which then escaped and has never since been confined.

Sun Story⁹

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

One time there was a husband and wife. The wife is really mean to her husband, all the time. Always quarrel.

She say. "Who you gonna marry? Who you gonna marry? You gonna marry the sun's daughter? Is that why you don't like me? I'd like to see you marry the sun's daughter. She's the only one got no dirt around her."

Finally, he took off. He walked all day. Kicked a clump of grass, walk on. Finally in the evening he lay down. In the middle of the night he woke up. Somebody pushing him. Here nobody around him. He lay down again. Same thing again. He jumped up and saw those little mice holes.

Here big door open and there's a little old lady sitting there. "My grandchild, my grandchild. I wonder what's bringing you here." she said.

"Well." he said, "my wife is always fighting me. Always telling me to marry the sun's daughter. That's why I go in the bush by myself. Figure I'll starve someplace."

"My grandchild, they say you can't come near that person, sun's daughter. Sit down. This ground is home to me."

He look around for a place to sit. Sit on ground.

She turned around to look for something. Picks up little spruce basket, the size of a cup. She brings out little tiny bit of dry salmon and dry salmon eggs.

He thinks to himself, "Is that going to fill me?" But he didn't say anything. He's so tired that after awhile he fall asleep while h e's sitting there. When he wakes up there's a big pot of boiled salmon eggs and a big pan of toasted dry salmon.

"Wake up. Eat before your meal gets cold," she call him. After he eat, there's still lots left over.

That little old lady tells him, "You're the one that saved me. One time you w ere going across the beaver dam, eight of you. Eight brothers, when they get ashore little mice run out of the grass and one of your brothers kick it in the water. Then the others did the same. Then finally the youngest one pick it

⁹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

up and say, 'Don't do that,' put it in a dry place under grass. You're the one that saved me when you're crossing the beaver dam. I just about froze that time. So I'm going to help you back," she said to him.

She gave him five things. One was something like stovepipe, then camp robber skin shirt, then humming bird skin shirt, then whetstone, then piece of ice.

"If you get in any trouble, if anything happen, call for me. From here on, you're going to come out in the middle of a meadow. There you camp.

Take out your stovepipe and pull it out like telescope. It will be like ladder. Climb up.

When you get up there you'll hear girls laughing. They're always playing on that swing. Put your camp robber's shirt on and fly to them. If they don't like you, try this humming bird shirt. It will fit you when you put it on."

He came to that meadow, and did what she said. He climb up, came to another land. He hears girls laughing, swinging each other. He put on his camp robber skin, fly to them. "Ugh, go away," they don't like him. "You're no good, we don't like you."

So he took off. Put on humming bird shirt. Fly around.

That youngest one caught him. They play with him. The oldest one said, "I want to buy him from you. I'll give you a gold spoon for him."

"No. I got a gold spoon," that youngest one answer.

"I'll, give you a silver spoon."

"No, I've got a silver spoon, too."

"I'll give you shell spoon, dentalium shell."

Well, she hasn't got that one, so she say okay, she'll sell him. "If you give me that spoon, I'll give you my bird."

When they swing all the time, that swing rings like a bell, just like church bell. They get off that swing to play with the bird and their father hears that bell stop ringing. Send slave out to get them.

"Your father says you come in. That bell stopped ringing."

"Oh, we're just playing." So they came in, brought that bird,

When they went home she gave that younger sister that spoon;

They went in their room, play with that bird. Finally come out to eat, then they go back to their room. They kept talking and laughing half of the night. Their father's getting suspicious.

Early in the morning, he got up; the sun gets up early in the summertime, in June.

In the morning when they woke up, here's a man sleeping with them. He take off his shirt and turn into man. They're playing.

Finally, that slave comes in tell them to get up.

That father says, what's wrong with them. How come they stay in bed? They're laughing half the night.

Well, that slave tells him there's a man in there with them. That's why they're laughing all the time. That slave comes back, "Your daddy says for you to come out and have breakfast. Bring him out too. Eat."

"Put him on the swing," he tells those girls. Nobody gets on that swing except those girls. If anyone gets on, they fly off and smash. They don't want to, but they have to do what he tells them. They put him on the swing and when he fell off, that whetstone save him. It couldn't break so he didn't break, turn into that.

Dinnertime they come in again. "Tell him to get water for me," the father say.

On the road to the water, there's two big birds sitting, waiting to kill him. Just like eagle. Somehow he kill them too. His body's just like whetstone; don't get hurt.

He brought that water up. Then that father boil the water and put him in it. But he put on his humming bird shirt, made himself real small and held on to that piece of ice his grandma gave him. He held on just under the pot handle on the pot lid and that ice saved him.

Next that sun tried to throw him on a rock, but he turned into whetstone again, and broke that rock. That's what his grandma gave him that whetstone for.

So he got rid of all those dangerous things. That father said, "Where did you get that man? He got rid of all my good stuff, well, we have to go to court now."

They went to court. The father said, "Who claim that man? Whose husband is he?"

The youngest said, "I caught that bird. But my sister bought it off me for shell spoon."

Well he's her husband then, the older sister's. The father brought out the marriage mat, fed them a big feast. That's their marriage feast.

They live up there a long time. Quite a few years. Then that man starts to think about his father and mother and brothers. He misses them.

His father-in-law knew it right away. He tell his daughter, "Your husband is lonesome for his mother and father. You're meant to be like that. You go with him to his country."

They're going to go. He gave them piece of stovepipe, and a little boat and an eagle feather.

"Every morning when he gets water for you, put that feather in the water," he tells his daughter. "If it comes out dry, you're okay. But if it comes out wet, that means his old wife speaks to him."

When they got to the place where he came up, they went down that stovepipe. They got to a creek and camped. Then they put that little boat in the water and it turned into a great big boat. They went to a lake, came across that lake to his people's camp. He tie up the boat, came to his father and mother. He told them he got married; he told his youngest brother to run down to the boat and call her up.

He went to the boat, but all he could see was a sun ray in the back of the boat. So he came back.

“That’s her. Bring her back.”

So he went and told that ray, “Your husband wants you.”

That’s the way it looked to other people, just a sun ray alongside of her husband all the time. Finally, after awhile his family could see her too, but not outside people.

Every morning he got fresh water and she always put that feather in. And it always came out dry.

The story went around that he had married a sun ray. “He’s got a wife and nobody can see her, just a sun ray.” His old wife got jealous.

But she heard the story that early in the morning he always gets water for her. So she hides along that path and one morning when he go by, she grab him, started fighting.

“Don’t bother me,” he said. “You don’t like me and that’s why I married sun’s daughter.” He got away anyway.

When he brought that water up, she put that feather in and it came out wet. She threw that water away, don’t want to drink it. “Nobody tell you to talk to your old wife.” And she start to move. He tried to grab her but his hand go through her. She disappeared.

She came back to her father.

Early in the morning he started to get ready to go out.

“What time do you feel me worst, on earth?”

“At twelve o'clock,” she said. “That’s the time we used to just about roast. But please have mercy on my husband.”

“If you want me to have mercy on him, why did you leave him?”

“Because his wife talk to him.”

“Well, I’m not going to have mercy on anybody,” he said.

Well next day, w hen that father went out he set fire to everybody down below. Burn up the world. The sun paint his legs with Red Indian paint, and then he burns the world. The first one to die was that first wife. She got so hot she jump in the lake and boiled to death.

But that’s where ice came in handy again for that man. He took that ice and his brothers and father and mother and went under moss that hangs over the edge of the river. They were shivering with that ice until everything’s all over.

After that he went back to that stovepipe in the meadow, and he went up to his wife again and stayed with her for good. He explained to her and they forgive him. He explained that that woman grabbed him.

Thunder¹⁰

As told by Titus Bedes

Thunder was a big man, a wild man, a strong man. He was a good wrestler and killed people when he wrestled with them. He had sharp stones like razor blades in his house and when he wrestled he used to kill men by throwing them on the sharp stones that cut them.

Two young brothers were studying about it. They exercised three times a day. They were wrestling early in the morning, and they broke sticks before they built a fire. They were quick, too.

The younger said, "Well, it's about the best time to tackle him."

The older one said, "No, we got to take a long time before we do it. We got to study other things."

He watched all the birds that fly and picked out the fastest ones of all. "We got to make a canoe that way—like that duck—that will travel just as fast and can keep up with those ducks"

Well, they made a canoe, using the duck's breastbone [*as a model for the bow?*].

He said, "We got to make a nice stone house, all underground, with five or six different roofs of logs and stones and sand mixed up together. We better be prepared, because we're going to tackle him right now."

(So they made the house.) "Now we are prepared to tackle him!" So they went right up to Thunder's house.

Thunder said, "Hello, boys, hello." He wasn't angry but talked just fine. He said, "Here's where I'm going to have my fun."

The boys said, "Sure, it's better just to have more fun. Let's have lots of fun."

There were lots of people there to watch them, too. Some grown-up boys were there to study wrestling. The grown up boys started to wrestle.

Thunder said, "What's the matter? You don't wrestle?"

"Well, we don't know how. We never seen people do it before."

The younger brother asked his brother, "Shall I tackle him first?"

The older said, "No, leave it to me. If he beats me, you will be the last one."

Thunder said, "If I get killed there will be bad damage." He told the people, "I make flames. It will blind and kill people, and it will destroy the houses and everything. The only way you could stop me

¹⁰Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

is with a female dog. Pinch her ear and scold her and make her holler all you can. That's the only way I could stop." The young fellows heard that.

He started to wrestle. The older brother wrestled, and he pretended to fall down once and a while. Then the boy lifted Thunder up in the air and threw him on the rock and cut him in two and killed him that way. He told his brother, "Beat it!"

So they ran out as fast as they could and started to paddle as fast as they could to their home at top speed. They ran right underground into their own house. Thunder was right up to them already. He hit that place awfully hard, like gunpowder, with flames and lights and everything. He broke through all but the last roof.

The brothers said, "By golly, I don't think we live!" but they had a female dog with them, so they pinched her ear, and she started to holler and squeal. The Thunder stopped. People in Alaska still pinch a female dog's ear to make the thunder stop.

CROW & RAVEN STORIES



Figure 3 Raven- Created by Graham Everitt

Birth of Crow¹¹

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

One time there is a girl whose daddy is a very high man. They kept her in her bedroom all the time. Men try to marry her all the time but they say no. she's too good.

Crow wanted to be born. Wants to make the world. So he made himself into a pine needle. A slave always brings water to that girl. One time he brings water with pine needle in it. She turns it down. Makes him get fresh water. He brings it again. Again pine needle there. Four times he brings water and

¹¹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

each time it's there. Finally, she gives up. She spits that pine needle out and drank the water. But it blew in her mouth and she swallowed it. Soon she's pregnant.

Her mother and daddy are mad. Her mother asks her, "Who's that father?"

"No, I never know a man," she say.

That baby starts to grow fast. That girl's father had the sun, moon, stars, daylight, hanging in his house. He's the only one has them. The world was all dark, all the time. The child begged for them to play with.

Finally the father gives his grandchild sun to play with. He rolls it around. He plays with it, laughs, has lots of fun. Then he rolls it to the door and out it goes. "Oh!" he cries. He just pretends. He cries because that sun is lost.

"Give me moon to play with." They say no at first. Like now if baby asks for sun, moon, you say, "That's your grandfather's fire." Finally they give it to him.

One by one they give him sun, moon, stars, daylight. He loses them all.

"Where does she get that child from? He loses everything," her father say.

Why Raven is Black¹²

As told by George Blondin



In the beginning of the new world, a council of all the animals and birds took place. Several strong medicine people changed themselves into animals to attend this meeting. Raven was president of the conference. Raven said to the birds and animals, "you should all be painted beautiful colors so we will be nice-looking in this world."

The animals agreed. Because Raven was so clever, they asked him to paint them. Raven said, "I'll do it, as long as you promise to paint me last, so I will be more beautiful than everybody else." The agreement was made, and Raven started working on the birds and animals, painting them so that their fur and plumage was as colorful as we it today. After many days of painting, Raven said, "I am finished. Now paint me, the best you can." One of the birds said, "We will blindfold you, and later you will see that you are the most beautiful bird in the world."

The bird blindfolded Raven, then took coal from the fire and rubbed it all over Raven until he was completely black. When this was done, the birds and animals made signs to each other to go back to their homes across the world, leaving Raven sitting alone and blindfolded. As all the birds took off they made a loud thunder-like noise. Hearing this raven tore his blindfold off and was enraged to see

¹² Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

that he had not been painted in brilliant colors, as he expected. Instead he was black like the night, when no colors at all can be seen.

Rubbing coal dust from his eyes, Raven glared furiously around looking for someone he could punish for the trick that had been played on him. Everybody was gone except the Arctic loon, who was swimming in a stream nearby and calling quaha quaha. Splashing into the water, Raven scooped up grey clay from the river bottom and used it to cover the bird's beautiful head. That is why the loon has a grey head today.

In his anger, Raven wanted even more revenge. He could see a moose standing warily in the distance. Raven yelled at the moose, "All your life you'll hide in very thick bush, in fear!" and that's why the moose sticks to the thick bush, even today.

Raven searched for a long while, but he couldn't find any more game or birds. The animals and birds had gotten away with their trick, and that's why Raven is still the color of coal.

Story of How Crow Made World¹³

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith



That Crow he's like God. This is how he made world. Long time ago animals were all people. This is before they had light.

One time they're all out fishing. Fox and bear, fishing there you know. They talk like a person. Crow comes up.

"Caw, you sleep you fellows. If I make daylight you're going to be scared," he said. Crow say that. He's really an Indian though.

People say, "You know that man who got it? Sun? That's his daughter place in there. Old time just like. You don't got that kind," they tell him.

That big poplar tree inside, rotten. He take off all, and throw beside. He throw it in the lake, he go in the lake. He don't know where he's going. He can't die that Crow, he can't get killed.

"That man where he stay that sun he got it, there's that place I want it. I want my boat landed there." That's what he said. He make song that way. I know that song too.

Night time. Gee big house there. Look just like it got a light on. He walk around. He get out. Where that big water run down.

He just think. He go turn into a little dirt, he put him right there. "I wish he want to get water." He want to see that house now. "I wish that woman, she want to drink water."

¹³ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

Lady coming to get water. Just like a dish, that pot (she carried). He fall right down there. He go into that pot. He go in like little dirt. He stay there. Go in.

Gee, shine, that house. Light in there. Big one! Two. Right there (points up), and right there. That's where he throw that light.

He think: "What I'm going to do?" That girl, young girl you know, what you think he did? He went in that cup. That girl he start to drink water, he swallow him down!

Just in two weeks that big his stomach he got that girl. No man there, nothing. His mother tell his husband, "That our girl is going to have baby. Where he come from that baby?"

"I don't know," he said

Just one month, she started now with that baby, sick. Rich man that man, you know, that Daddy. Put everything underneath. That baby gonna be born on top.

Crow think, "Gonna be born on top baby. Wish they put some grass underneath me." That's what he think. He think for that lady nurse, "Get grass, get grass."

That girl's getting tired how. That lady say, "I'm going to try that grass. Good one. I'm going to fix it underneath." Did it just right then. Soft one, just like a feather pillow. He's born there.

That's cold. Indian climate cold, see?

Little boy. Ah gee, he see his grandma. "Ah my little grandchild." He did his eye that way (winking). Bad kid! (laughing) "What he do that," she say her husband. "He do that this way."

"I guess he play with you," he say. "You see now? Hi little baby, you going to laugh you," he tell him.

Just one week he start to walk.

Two weeks, that big. He run around. Up there big ones, moon and the sun. That's the one he throw light. He start to cry for that moon.

"Take it down," he tell his Mamma. "I want to play with it." His grandpa say, "Don't want to cry, that baby. Take off. Let him play. He can't lose him."

He roll around. I don't know where he put him. He swallow him, I don't know. But he got him. They look around all over. Lost. Just old sun there now.

After about one week he started to cry. Cry and cry. He got him that moon though. Someplace he got him. He cry and cry his eyes just about slip out.

His grandpa say, "Take off. I don't like my grandchild's eyes that way," he said.

He play around. He's going to get away now, that one. They open someplace when it's hot that house. They got lady working there, you know.

"Say, lady, open that. Too hot."

"You feel hot?"

"Yes," he said

She open. He's going to get out that way. Should put away that sun now.

(Clap hands) Gone!

"Where's that little kid?" Some place he fall down they think

He's thinking about that his boat, that rotten wood. Just use for boat. Go in it. Soon.

"I want to be at that fishing place, down the bay," he said. Don't know how long he stay there (in the boat). "Whew, whew," he paddle.

There's that place! They're fishing yet!

"I'm going to make daylight you people, just quiet now," he said.

"Aw, you got no light, you got no sun," they tell him. He got 'em now.

"What I going to do you think? The best way I'm going to throw in the sky, going to stay there." He throw that moon first time. "Stay there for good," he said. After that he pull out that sun. He throw. Everything go in the water. Just one little boy, one little girl, they still walk four hands. They want to do that way and he grab them.

"You're gonna walk two foot, you're not gonna walk four. I got two foot, I walk," he said. He grab that kid. One little girl, one little boy.

"I'm going to raise you," he said. "Sun up there now, daylight now."

Some of them go in the water. Some of them go in the woods, they run away. Two kids only he save. One little girl and one little boy.

"You're gonna have twelve kids," he tell them, that girl. "This one's gonna marry you. You're going to have two foot, you're not going to walk like that. Your hair going to be this way, and your hands." He show them.

"No more, no that sun he stay for good. This ground turns but it stay that sun in one place. Moon same too. He don't move. That moon, he just stay there." That's what he said, that Crow.

That kid, he make it grow. In the morning, he make it get up, that kid. (She demonstrates rubbing child's back.) He do that to make it grow. That's funny, eh?

Then he get grub for them. "What grub I'm going to get?" he said. He bring them grub. Some kind of fish he give it.

Crow Brings Light to the World¹⁴

Mrs. Angela Sidney

Then Crow disappears. Has those things with him in a box. He walks around. Comes to river. Lots of animals are there fox, wolf, wolverine, mink, rabbit. Everybody's fishing. That time animals all talk like people talk now. The world is dark.

"Give me fish," Crow says.

No one pay any attention.

"Give me fish or I bring daylight."

They laugh at him.

He's holding a box - starts to open it and lets one ray out. Then they pay attention. He opens box a bit more. They're scared. Finally he broke that daylight box and throw it out. Those animals scatter, hide in bush and turn into animals like now. Then the sun, moon, stars, daylight come out.

"Go to the skies," Crow say. "Now no one man owns it," he say. "It will be for everyone."

He's right, what he say, that Crow.



Raven Restores Sun to the Sky¹⁵

As told by Medicine Man Luke, interpreted by Arthur

The raven was the cleverest deceiver of all animals, but has one good deed to his credit. At this time, when all animals were men, a bear, who was a bad man, did not want the people of the world to have light, so he took the sun down from the sky and hung it with a string on his neck and kept it covered with his coat. The raven came to his house and pretended to be a friend, and soon married the bear's daughter.

They very soon had a child who could walk as soon as born, and grew up in a very short while. The raven told the boy to get the sun from the bear, so the boy cried for it very much and finally the bear allowed the boy to play with it, but watched him carefully.

There was no hole in the roof, but the raven made one, and when the bear's attention was away for a moment the boy threw the sun up through the hole into the sky and the bear couldn't get it anymore. The raven then ran away and never came back, for the bear would like to kill him.

¹⁴ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

¹⁵ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Crow Gets Water¹⁶

As told by Johnny Fraser

I don't know how the first part starts.
I forget it now. The old people all die out.
Big Jim didn't tell us any story. He died four or five years ago.
In the old days, they used to sit down by the fire.
And first one person would tell a story, and then another, all the way around the circle.
And we all listened good.

There was one man that hand water—spring water.
He sat on that [protected it].
One man owned it.
Crow, he wanted to get it for the world, but he had no way to get it.
He tried to get that water.
He can't get it.
The man is sitting on it.
Well, Crow, he just makes up his mind.
Well, Crow, he tells that man "Who is older?"

The Water Man, he says, "I'm older than you."
They talk together.
Crow says, "Let's tell stories."
Well, Crow, he makes out [figures out] which way to get the water for the world.
Now they start telling stories.
Well, Crow, he starts the story.
Well, he tells the story.
He keeps on.



They [tell stories] all around.
Finally that man he tells the story to falls asleep.
The Crow gets the water.
That much he gets, just a little bit.
He carries it in his mouth.
He flies out with it.
The old man is left asleep.

Well, Crow is flying around.
He drops just a little bit [of water].
He drops it all over the world.
He has been all over.
That's why there is water all over [the world].
Before this, at first, before Crow came, there was not all water.

¹⁶ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

It was all dry land.

That's why Crow gets it from that man.
Well, that man, he had the water.
Crow dropped it just a little bit.
Then the last he spit out! It's salt water!

How Crow Brought Fish to Man¹⁷

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith

One man got fish that time. He steal. Crow tell him: "You my mother's brother." He tell him story, "Well, I got to stop now," he said. "I got to eat fish."

He open that..."Gee, look at that fish...Salmon, everything. Fresh water."

Which one you want to eat?" he tell him.

"That one."

"No, that King Salmon, but maybe that one."

"No, that one."

"No, not that one."

And he stays there, but I don't know how many days with that man. Get smart now. He want to steal that fish now

"Who owns you? Me." That's what he say to Crow

"How long ago you got that sun? Just a little while ago I see that sun. And that Crow got it."

"You know that sun?" Crow tell him. "Used to be my Daddy's own that sun."

"No," said that fisherman, "I don't think so."

"Yes," he say, "that's my Daddy's. You know how many years he throw away that sun. That's why sun there, moon there, stars there."

Well he see he's up against him. That man. Just a little while ago I guess, he don't believe in this.

"Me already I've got girlfriend that time you tell me. How big are you that time you tell me?"

¹⁷ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

"I'm going to tell you a story," Crow tell him. "But don't sleep. If you sleep, you're going to sleep for good, if I tell this story. It's three days. You say you're staying for three days?"

"Oh, yeah, I'm staying."

"All right. I'm going to start telling story now." Tell story, tell story, tell story.

After four days, no sleep. That man go down now.

"Ah, don't do that," he said. "Look at me, I don't sleep. Long way yet. You want to sleep. If you sleep you sleep for good. This is my story." He tell him. "You're going to die yourself that time." And he's scared you know.

He fall asleep. He suck all, that Crow, those fish. Eat them all up. That water, everything, all, he suck'em.

When that man wake up he say, "Aie! What you do that with my fish?"

"Take back my smoke place," he said. Tie him up there. Crow. Used to be just like a ptarmigan, that Crow. He put some pitch and wood underneath, you know, make it black.

Crow he steal that fish. That's why lake fish, at Marsh Lake, Laberge, he let everything go into that lake. That's how the people got fish.

Crow gets Fire¹⁸

As told by Titus Bedes



Long Time ago, the Indians didn't know how to make fire. Somebody thinks it was too much hot. All the people stayed together and talked about it. They had seen a fire but didn't know what it was.

"Why do you think it's hot?" someone asked?

Crow, he said, "I know how it build a fire. You can't get the fire. You get a chicken (grouse) or rabbit. Put them on a spit to cook them."

The people tried all day but couldn't make a fire. Hundreds of people try to make a fire. They couldn't do it.

Crow, he laugh. "Me, I done it! I got it easy!"

Then he took a long stick and made a hook on the end. He threw it in the water and hooked up fire. He hooked up burning coals. The people had never thought of that before. Crow took a little grass. Pretty soon he had a fire. He roasted the chicken and the rabbit.

¹⁸ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

After that, the people talked about how to keep the fire. All the Alaska people wanted to make another fire. Everybody tried, but they couldn't do it.

One Indian boy said, "I know what to do!"

He took a white rock and a black rock and struck them together. He made a spark. He took light, shiny sand grass. The spark caught in it. It burned. He shook the grass. But it was no good yet. Another fellow thought. He took rotten stuff (punk) from a birch. He made a string drill, a bow drill. He took the spark off with a bone knife. That fire worked.

Crow Makes People¹⁹

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

After that he walk around, fly around all alone. He's tired. He's lonely. He needs people. He took poplar tree bark. You know how it's thick? He carved it. Then he breathed into it.

"Live," he said. And he made person. He made Crow and Wolf too. At first they can't talk to each other. Crow man and woman are shy with each other -- look away. Wolf people same way.

"This is no good," he said. So he change that. He made Crow man sit with Wolf woman and he made Wolf man sit with Crow woman. So Crow must marry Wolf and Wolf must marry Crow.

That's how the world began.

Crow Makes Women²⁰

As told by Titus Bedes

There were no Women, only men. One place there was a girl, sitting down. Everybody tried to talk to the girl. She wouldn't say anything. Crow went after her. He was the boss. He tried to talk to her. She said nothing.

He built a fire. Crow said, "I'm sick."

The girl went to get wood (for a fire to keep him warm). Crow was just fooling. He saw a big sack of caribou skin. He grabbed the sack and put it in his canoe. The woman hollered and tried to locate (stop) him. She couldn't do it.

¹⁹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

²⁰ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

Crow went home to his own village. He had some women's clothes (that were in the sack). He had a while suit. He dressed some of the men in women's clothes. Next day they turned into women.

There were still no children. The women didn't know how to get a baby. [Crow evidently taught them.] The women started to get pregnant. They thought they were sick. The baby was moving inside. The woman wanted to cut her belly open and take out the child.

Crow said, "Don't cut it! That's not the way."

The women were alone. One woman held up another woman. Crow told them how. In half an hour the babies were born.

They wondered how to feed them. The babies couldn't eat.

Crow said, "Babies can't eat. Babies must suck on mother's breast." The babies suck(ed) their mothers.

Crow told them what to do when the mother goes away. They asked what Crow said, "Take fat. Put the fat on a long sharp stick. Baby is going to suck on the fat."

That's the way Indians do today.

Raven & the Goose²¹



As told by Diana Scesny Greene

The claim that raven once fell in love with a young goose girl. In those days, the ravens acted like people, but they were still flying. Raven stayed with the goose girl all summer. When it came time for the flock to go back down south to their home, raven said to her, "You can't leave me. I will go with you." So they started out flying down south, but soon Raven began to get tired.

He could not keep up with the big geese, which could fly a long way without getting tired. His girlfriend tried to give him a ride and carried him on her back for a long distance, but she too got tired. Then her mother and father took turns packing Raven on their backs while they flew south. Soon they grew tired of carrying him too.

Now, geese live on gravel and weeds and things of that kind, and when they landed on the gravel bars, there was nothing for Raven to eat. The farther south they flew, the weaker Raven became. The other geese were so tired of carrying him that they finally said, "We're not going to pack you anymore. You are going to have to do your best."

When they got to the ocean they told him that it was a long way across. "You had better think twice before you start out with us," they warned him. Raven decided that he had better go back. Ever since that time the raven has never tried to go south again.

²¹ *Raven Tales & Medicine Men Folktales from Eagle Village*. (n.d.). Eagle Village, Yukon, Canada: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource. Retrieved March 29, 2021

Crow Gets Married²²

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

One time Crow saw beautiful lady sit by river. She has red hair, white skin. You know how Crow is. He comes up to her, sort of friendly. He sat down.

“Hello,” he say. “What are you doing here?”

“Just fishing,” she say.

They call that one Fish Mother. Every time she come to water, fish came.

Crow said, “I know what we’ll do. We’ll make fish rack, dry fish. I got no one to look after. You got no one to look after you. We’ll stay together. We can pick up fish from water.

“No,” she say. “I’ll just catch them for me.”

“I’ll help you,” he say. “Help you eat them.”

They cut up fish, dry them. He stay there with her, but they sleep separate for two or three days.

After he marry that woman he never see her eat. She has a slave who brings her water. Crow always walk along beach picking seaweed to eat.

One day Crow comes back from picking seaweed. That slave is sleeping across fire. He sees light ashes on that slave. He wonders what this means. Look like somebody cook something. Crow is smart. He starts to tickle that slave so he laugh. When that slave laughs, Crow sees piece of fishmeat between his teeth. He pick at that piece of fish with his beak. “Where you get that fishmeat from?” Crow is greedy.

“I went to get my boss some water (that’s fishwife). When she put her fingers in that water fish come to her.”

So Crow did same thing. He said to her, “My beautiful wife, let me get water for you.” When he did that, he got fish too. When she stick her fingers in water, fish come.

Then he thinks. He says to her, “Let’s dry fish. Let me build a fish trap for you. Then you put your fingers in water and fish come.” He wants his wife to do that every day.

So he did. He built trap.

“Now, wife, put your fingers in water.” But his wife took bath there instead of just putting fingers in water and he got lots of fish. Fish start to come every day after that. When fish dry there’s not much work to do that time. So he starts walking again.

Every day he goes for a walk. Fish mother said to slave. “Crow, my husband, will say something against me, something to insult me. When he does, you go to your cache. Make cache in bush for your

²² Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.



fish. Make long stick to protect yourself and your fish. You will keep your fish, but he's going to lose all his."

One day she's hanging fish. He's looking at her. Under her arms he sees long red hair.

"Ha, ha, wife, you've got red hair under your arms," he insult her. She wave her arms, angry. Then she go to beach and disappear. She turn into fog, I guess. All the fish that are hanging there turn back into fish and come to life again. They run back into water. They go away.

Slave runs back to his cache. Crow didn't know he had cache.

Crow feels bad after that. Shouldn't say that. He feels bad. His wife keeps eye on him all time after she disappear. Crow has to eat seaweed again.

He's walking along beach. Comes to rock first. When he walks by that rock he hears something -- an echo -- making fun of him. Someone imitates him as he eats seaweed.

He backs up. Goes by that rock again. Same thing happens.

Do it two or three times.

The last time he kicks that rock. "What's that imitating me?" he says. Door in rock flies open and there's his wife.

Crow's packing devil's club. He grab that wife and switch her that devil's club.

Don't cry," he says. "Say 'Water go down, water go down, water go down'." She does that. Then he runs and looks. That water went down. There's lots of fish on that beach. He packs in those fish - salmon, ling cod.

He walks along, kicks stone. Say, 'Brother wake up, brother wake up.' But stone kept sleeping. Little further on see driftwood. "Brother wake up, wake up. Lots of fish." Dry stick, that driftwood, fly up in air. "You take salmon, brother," Crow tells him, "I'll take ling cod." Ling cod fat then. He cook ling cod. Made grease too. Except he throw away liver. That's why ling cod liver fat. I guess.

Then water rushes back in. He goes back to that rock where wife is. The door is closed. No rock no more. His wife is gone.

Tides flow ever since he tell his wife that. That's how Crow made the tides.

Raven's Wife²³

As told by Diana Scesny Greene

Once there was a rich chief who had a beautiful daughter. Men came from near and far, from all villages, to marry the girl, but the chief refused everyone who came. There was always something

²³ *Raven Tales & Medicine Men Folktales from Eagle Village*. (n.d.). Eagle Village, Yukon, Canada: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource. Retrieved March 29, 2021

wrong, and the chief always had some excuse why he could not choose any of the men for his daughter. Raven heard about the chief and his daughter, and he thought to himself "Leave it to me. I'll try." So he dressed himself as well as he could, putting on layers of clay in every color, especially ivory white.

He dressed himself to look very handsome, then he started off downriver in his birch bark canoe to where the chief lived. As raven paddled his canoe near the village, everyone shouted, "Here comes a man!" When the bird got close to shore he said that he had to have something to walk on. He pretended to be very rich and that he could not walk on bare ground. He was dressed so well that the girl's mother believed him.

She took out a while stack of smoked tanned moose hides and ran down to the beach, where she spread them out for him to walk on as he made his way to her place. When he reached the chief's house, they prepared a good warm bed of caribou fur robes for him. Then they fixed something for Raven to eat. They treated him as well as they could, giving him their very best, because they believed that he was very rich.

Now all the while there had been a female dog in the house with little puppies. Just before raven started to eat, he told the woman "I don't like that dog being in the house." So the old woman took the dog outside and killed it. She hung the dog out in the brush not too far away from the house. After that a place was made for raven to sleep.

The next morning Raven was supposed to start off downriver and take the chief's daughter home with him. The chief had given him the girl because he thought that Raven had everything he wished for his daughter. All Raven's fancy clothes had fooled the chief. Now there is an old saying that Raven craves eyes, that he will eat all kinds of them.

That was why the night before he had told the chief's wife to kill the dog. He just wanted to eat the dog's eyes. So during the night, on toward morning, while everyone else was still asleep, Raven went outside and ate the dog's eyes. The next morning, when the chief and his wife saw that the eyes were gone, they thought that something strange was going on, but they still let their daughter go home with Raven.

Raven and the girl set out in the morning in his birch bark canoe. He sat in front of the canoe and leaned back on the crosspiece in the middle while she sat behind the crosspiece. As they went down the river she played with his hair, braiding it, since men wore their hair long in those days and often braided it. Soon it started to rain and all the clay that raven had put on to make himself look rich began to get wet and come off. The girl noticed that he looked different, and soon began to recognize that he was a raven. So while she was playing with his hair she tied it to the crosspiece in the canoe.

She tangled it up in all kinds of knots so that he would not be able to untangle it quickly from the crosspiece. Then she told Raven that she wanted to get out of the canoe to go to the bathroom up in the brush. Raven landed but when she walked onto the beach he said "Just go there and don't go into the brush." He suspected that she was going to run away, and that is just what she planned to do.

She said, "I can't go here; I'm a bashful girl," but as soon as she got to the woods she took off and ran home. She was very angry at her father and scolded him saying, "There have been many good-looking men who I would have liked but you wouldn't have them. You made your choice, now you can have him!"

Never Trust a Raven²⁴

As told by George Blondin

A long time ago, a group of hunters shot a fat bear—or sahlo, as bears are called by the Dene. They cooked this bear carcass over the fire and put a birchbark container underneath it to collect the fat, which they planned to use later on. Since the bear was very fat, they had to keep changing containers.

During this procedure, Raven was sitting in a big old tree watching the people. As the containers, one after the other became full of grease, the hunters fetched more and more. Soon they had used all the containers they could find, and the precious grease was dripping into the fire. The people were upset at the waste—they needed the fat for the long winter ahead.

One of the men noticed Raven watching them. “Let’s invite him down,” he said. “We’ll feed him some meat and fat and then ask him what to do. He should know, since he’s an oldtimer.” It was agreed. “Raven Grandfather,” called one of the hunters, “come down here and eat with us. We have a problem, and maybe you could help us.”

Raven joined them on the ground. He turned himself into human form, sat down, and listened to their problem. “That’s not hard to fix,” he said. “A long time ago, people used to take the bear’s intestine and wash it well in some nearby water. Then they’d tie one end in a knot and leave it in the water, and put the other end under the roasting bear to catch the grease. As the fat ran down the length of the intestine and into the water, it hardened. The people would remove the solid grease and save it to eat with dry meat or dry fish later on.”

“What a good idea!” the hunters exclaimed. “Lets do it!” and they did. The intestine was so long that its tied end wound around a little point of land, and the hunters couldn’t see it from the place where they were roasting the bear. Raven took several walks around the point.

After a while, the hunters noticed that the bear gut was not filling up as it should. They became suspicious, and one or two of them followed the raven man and watched to see what he was up to. Sure enough, Raven was untying the end of the intestine and eating up the grease as it hardened, then tying up the knot again. When he realized he’d been caught cheating, Raven turned himself back into a bird and flew to the top of a tree and began squawking at the hunters.

“You no-good raven!” the hunters yelled. “You no-good bird!” they could do nothing, since they couldn’t fly, but they’d learned what everyone knows nowadays—that ravens cannot be trusted.



²⁴ Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

How Raven got his beak back²⁵

As told by Diana Scesny Greene

In the old days there were ducks by the name of wuträw. These ducks had beautiful long hair and Raven was jealous of them because he did not have hair like that. Since he was always playing tricks, Raven thought up a trick to play on them. It was custom in the old days that when someone died, the relatives would burn all their own hair. So Raven went to the ducks and told them that their beloved uncle died. "What are you waiting for?" he asked them, and right away a great number of the ducks began to cry and burn their hair.

When they had just finished burning their hair he told them, "Wait a minute. I don't know the news very well, I only told you what I heard. I don't know what happened for sure." Then the ducks realized that Raven had played a trick on them. "There goes Raven with his trick!" they shouted as they tried to grab him. "There he goes again!" Finally they got hold of him and threw him in the fire. They did not hold him in it very long, because he didn't get burned very much.

They held him upside down-down in the fire, and he said to them, "Turn me up so that my beak won't fall out." If his beak got too warm it would come out, and even though they took him out of the fire right away, his beak still got too warm and fell out on the ground. The ducks grabbed for it and would not give it back. Raven tried to tell them to give it back to him, but they would not listen. He had ruined their beautiful hair so they refused to give him his beak. They handed it instead to one old lady and told her, "Don't give it back to him, no matter what."

As long as the old woman had the beak, they knew that they would not lose it. Then Raven thought up another trick. He was staying in their village, which was next to a river. Every day he went out of the village and disappeared. After a while they ask him, "What are you doing? Where are you going? Every day you go out." He told them that since they had his beak his mouth hurt him, so he went out to where it was cool so that his mouth would feel good and would not ache. He told them that he lay down and took his mouth out and placed it in the cool moss next to him and that it felt good there.

In all of this he lied to them. All the times he had gone out of the village he had gone far up river to a spot where he was building a raft and canoes out of moss. He was making it look like a lot of people were coming downriver, and he even made dogs tied up on the raft, all out of moss. From a long way off it would look like people coming, and the people in the village where he was staying would get excited. He even made the moss into woman with babies on their backs standing on the raft.

One evening when he came back to the village he said, "I hear that soon a whole group of people are going to come downriver." He said this because he was almost done with the raft. Then one day after he came back the people saw a bunch of rafts coming down the river and they shouted "Here come people!" They were very excited to see other people.

All this time the old lady hung on to the beak so that Raven would not be able to get it back. During the excitement he stood very close to the old woman and when the raft came closer she shouted

²⁵ *Raven Tales & Medicine Men folktales from Eagle Village*. (n.d.). Eagle Village, Yukon, Canada: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource. Retrieved March 29, 2021

“Here come the people!” Where can I put this beak?” Raven was next to her and said quickly, “Give it to me.” She was so excited that she did just what he told her. Raven grabbed the beak and put it on, then flew up to the top of a tree, laughing, “Caw-caw-caw-caw!”

The people were very angry with the old woman, and each one of them rebuked her saying, “Ne, ji na chi.” As they said this they pushed her head back, pressing the backs of their fingers against the side of her nose. So many people did this to her that both sides of her nose were raw. As for Raven, he had been in such a hurry to put his beak back on that he put it on backwards. That is why his beak looks funny even to this day.

Crow Loses his Eye²⁶

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

One time Crow’s walking along beach. Came to blueberry patch. He took his eye out and put it on a rock.

“Look for boat. Watch out,” he tell it. He goes off to bush to eat blueberries.

That eye holler at him. “Boat’s coming. Boat coming. *Yawk gun at koo.*”

He run out. He look. No boat. He picks up that eye.

“Don’t lie to me. That’s bad luck.” He tell him. He throw that eye up and down to punish it. He sets it back on rock again. “Don’t lie,” he tells it. He goes off again to pick blueberries.

That eye holler again. “Boat coming. *Yawk gun at koo.* Boat coming. *Yawk gun at koo.* Somebody pick me up.”

Crow doesn’t believe him. No more holler.

“Maybe it’s true,” says Crow. He investigate, he check.

“Too bad my eye.” Where’s that boat gone. He thinks. He knows.

He takes huckleberry and puts it in his eye. He comes up to the people on that boat, where they’re camping. He comes up real sure of himself.

“*Kla goo.* Surprise. We find a talking eye on a rock,” they say. “Let me see,” he say. They give to him. “Boy you sure look like the Crow’s eye.” Bang. He sticks in his eye. He took it. He took off.

²⁶ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

Crow Loses His Nose²⁷

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

Kids are out fishing. Crow came back by a different way. Came to them. They say to him, "Something strange happen. We see eye sitting talking on a rock."

Crow say to them, "Something strange happen to me too. I have a dream that there's a war coming. It happen like that long time ago. I lost my mother and father both in a war. That why I am alone. You people should move on an island.

"Boats leaking," they say.

"Put fish grease on it," he say. They do that. They put boats in water. They don't leak.

"Put all kids in one boat. I'm captain," he say.

Little way out he goes and licks fat off those boats. He eats kids' boat last. Boats start leak. Those kids drown. He tells them, "Become diver - loon." So kids make noise like suffering. That's why loons do that.

One of those boats land someplace. He came to those people again. He starts to eat fat off that last boat. They're fishing. Catch him on hook. They pull and pull. He try to stay down. They finally pull his nose off.

"What's wrong here?" they say. 'First we find eye and Crow takes it. Then Crow predicts war. Then the kids drown. Then we find nose. Sure looks like Crow nose."

Crow makes nose out of pitch and comes to them from a different way. He grabs that nose and took off. Crow's always in trouble.

Raven & the Whale²⁸

As told by Diana Scesny Greene

A whale was resting on the beach when Raven came along. Raven said to him, "Let's see who has the biggest mouth."

The whale said, "You start first. You open your mouth." So Raven opened his mouth wide.

Then the whale said, "I have a bigger mouth than you."

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *Raven Tales & Medicine Men folktales from Eagle Village.* (n.d.). Eagle Village, Yukon, Canada: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource. Retrieved March 29, 2021

“Well let’s see,” said Raven. Now Raven had a little pack on his back with wood, a knife, and a piece of flint in it, and when the whale said, “Your mouth is small, my mouth is bigger,” Raven said,

“Okay, open your mouth.” When the whale opened his mouth Raven flew right in.

Then he looked all around inside while the whale talked to him, saying, “You can do whatever you like in there, but don’t touch my heart.”

Raven ate everything inside the whale except the heart. More and more he wanted to touch the heart, but the whale kept telling him, “Don’t touch my heart, don’t. If you do, I’m going to go out into the deepest ocean with you.” Still Raven wanted to touch the whale’s heart so badly that finally he just cut it off.

As soon as Raven did it he said, “Let him go to the beach, let him go to the beach.” Over and over again he kept repeating it, because Raven was a powerful medicine man. So the whale landed on the beach. Many people came along and found the whale. They started to cut him up, and when they got close to the stomach and opened it up, Raven flew out. He flew very fast, then drew his wings in, making himself like a ball, and went spinning out of sight.

He landed somewhere else, then walked back to the people who were still butchering the whale. When they saw him the people shouted, “Here comes Raven!”

He asked them, “What do you have there?”

They answered him, “A whale.”

“Did you kill it?” he asked, knowing all the while that he himself had killed it.

“No, it was lying on the beach,” they said.

Then he asked them, “Did you see anything come out of the whale?”

“There was a black thing that came out when we cut it open,” they told him.

So he warned them, saying “That’s a bad sign. In the old days, in the kai-yoo times, people would not touch that whale because the black thing came out of it.”

When he told them what a bad sign it was, all the people drew back from the whale. “That means you are going to have starvation, he went on. “That black thing means you are going to have a bad time.

So everyone left the whale, and at first Raven pretended that he was going to leave with them. Then, pretending to be sick, he said, “I am going to stay here.” He told them to give him their birch bark baskets so that he could build a fire. They all collected their birch bark baskets and gave them to him.

When the people had gone home, Raven started to butcher the whale, putting up lots of meat to dry and filling the birch baskets with grease. Soon one man came back to the Raven. When he had nothing to eat, this man remembered the whale and started back to where he knew it was. When he got there, the man knew what Raven had been doing, so Raven gave him some of the meat.

After the whale meat was almost equally divided between them, Raven told the man, "Let's eat your meat before we eat mine."

While they were eating the man's share of the meat, Raven secretly ate some of his own meat in between. When the man's meat was all gone and he said to Raven, "Let's eat yours," he saw that there was nothing left. There was nothing there where Raven's meat had been.

Raven said to him, "I see a mouse has been into my food. It's all gone."

So they started off, raven and the man, to look for more to eat someplace else. They came to another group of people with a whale and Raven told them, "We always save the intestines for making grease and tallow," which is what the people in those days did.

"We always line the intestine along the creeks zig-zagging it along the banks. If we keep putting grease in at one end, soon it will be full and we will have lots of grease."

The people started to do just that, stretching the long intestine along the winding creek, and they made tallow for a long time, always pouring it back into the intestine. Every once and a while they would not see Raven, because he was down at the other end of the intestine drinking all the tallow.

Soon the people found out what Raven was doing, so they put a piece of bone into the intestine along with the grease. As he was drinking, Raven swallowed the bone and choked on it.

The people heard a lot of noise down at the other end of the intestine, so they ran down there. When they got there, Raven had gotten the bone out and said to them, knowing why they had run down, "There's nothing wrong with me. I was just making a noise."

"What's wrong with you, Raven?" they asked anyway. "Are you playing a trick on us again?" "Nothings wrong," he repeated.

"I'm just playing around, having a good time, and that is why I made that noise. Caw-caw-caw-caw!"

Crow Meets Grizzly Bear²⁹

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith

That's the time he goes to Grizzly Bear. They all around shore. He stop there.

"My auntie's husband," he say. "That's my daddy sister you married."

That bear get mad. Well that grease he drink cold, that bear.

"Where you fish?" Crow said.



²⁹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

"Lots of fish in that bay, halibut. Used to be lots."

"Can we go there? I know how to fish anyway" Crow said.

I don't know how he get that fish tail, King Salmon. That one he (Crow) got it. "When I go fishing, you sit down other way. Don't look at me," he said. "I got bait for hook," he said. Finally he do that (grunt, grunt). Ten, he got them. Ten halibut. Big one.

Crow show him how he cut it. Instead he cut open that bear with knife. Kill him.

Then he go back, that bear partner. "Gonna give you something to eat." He pick off lice.

That bear's partner stick out his tongue for that one. Crow pull off his tongue!

"Talk now," say Crow.

"Huoh, heh," that bear partner can't talk.

"My auntie -- that bear wife -- is hungry. I guess I'm gonna take her fish. Fish stomach."

That auntie don't know he's gonna kill her. He pick up those little rock, round ones. He throw in fire. That Crow.

"I'm gonna cook for you this fish stomach, my auntie. Sit down."

Bear partner try to tell her, that lady, "Huoh, heh, huoh." "What's the matter? What's wrong?" she tell him. That bear woman don't hear him.

"That husband (of yours) pretty near fell in when we're getting this big fish," Crow tell her. She believe him.

He put those hot rocks inside that fish stomach, one each one, each one. "Just don't chew them, my auntie, just swallow them down, swallow them down." She believe it, swallow down, swallow down, it's getting hot.

"Drink water now, drink water now." He give her water. Boiling hot. Her stomach got rocks now.

He sit down up there. That bear lady get mad you know. Just go around that way.

He tell her, "You gonna sleep pretty soon my auntie, don't get mad too much," he tell her. Well her stomach's all cooked now, you know. Fall down dead. Crow he kill her now.

That bear partner scared now, want to run away.

"My auntie sleep. Come on," Crow tell him. "You see that island? You going to stay for good there. Don't go on the shore no more. You're gonna die if you go on the shore. You're gonna be home there."

And he's gone.

Crow he do everything. He makes the world. He can't die too.

Crow and the Foggy Man³⁰

As told by Titus Bedes

It was summer, about the middle of August. It was in the ducks' country. The people were going out on the lakes to hunt ducks. As soon as the people went, a big fog came up and they never came back. People were getting lost all the time in the fog.

The people next to that place said, "I don't know what's the matter."

Old Crow said, "Take me." He said, "I'll find out."

He went to work and made a canoe out of sand stuck together with pitch. And the paddle was made of the same way. He studied about making an arrow. "I've got to make it fancy," he said. He made it out of pitch. "Let me go. I'll fix them!"

He went out and around the lakes. He saw a man paddling in the lakes, and said to himself, "No wonder all the men are missing. There's the man that caused it. That's why the men get lost."

He paddled close to him. The man was called Foggy Man (Ok dena; Oq dena).

He told the Crow, "What do you want? You looking for trouble?"

"No dear friend, I never look for trouble. Let's be friends together all our life time."

"What for? I don't want to be friend," said Foggy Man.

Crow said, "That's no trouble to make friends."

"Let's have a race in our canoes."

Crow said, "All right. I'll take you on."

Old Crow win it.

"What do you say? Shall we be good friends and trade our canoes?" asked the old Crow. [*Special friends among the Dena would exchange some of their possessions.*]

"No," said Foggy Man. "I won't stand for it. You are trying to fool me, or something?"

Crow said, "No, mister, I never did. I don't want to fool you. I just want to be good friends with you."

"Well, let's trade canoes."

The Crow said, "We'll trade everything we have, just the way she stands."

"All right, I'll take you on."

³⁰ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

The Foggy Man paddled right into the middle of a big lake like an ocean. He was in Crow's canoe in the middle of the lake.

Crow said, "I' going to make that man disappear. Let the canoe return to ashes."

That's the end of it. The canoe turned to ashes. That's how Crow killed the man that way.

Crow, he came back and as he paddled home, he sang, "You ought to do that long time ago. Leave it to me!"

He told the people, "You could go out to hunt ducks any time now. You needn't be afraid. I got rid of that man. No danger now. Go out and kill anything you want to."

K'uda (Q'uda)—the end.

Foggy man lived in the water. I don't know why he killed the people that got lost. The Foggy Men lived below the water. Whenever they came up it was foggy.

Crow Fools his Brother³¹

As told by Mrs. Angela Smith

Crow and his brother (drift log) cook fish, make lots of grease. Fish almost dry. Crow plans to steal it.

Night time Crow sleeps. He pretend to dream funny. Makes noise in sleep. "Huun, hunn, go back from the beach brother." he say.

Brother wakes him up. "You dream bad. Wake up."

"Gee, I dream bad. I dream war come upon us. Like one time before. I was right that time, I dream like that when I'm gonna lose my mother and father. War come upon them. People all got killed. I'm going to make bow, arrow, spear."

Crow went out all next day. He makes spear out of poplar tree bark, dry one. One for self. Brother didn't pay attention. That night he dream again. Same thing he say, "Brother go this way. I'm gonna go down." Brother wake him up.

Next day he went out again. Got everything ready stick for spear, stone too. Spear for brother, spear for him. All ready.

Finally next night hear big noise like big wind came on.

"Brother we got war! War come upon us! You go back. Me to the beach."



³¹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

His brother go out. "Eh, what is that?" Nothing but birds. All the birds in the world. Flap around him. He stood there awhile. "Eh, what is that? I thought you mean real people."

He fights war with the birds.

Meantime Crow eats all his brother's grease, fish meat too. When brother find all his grease gone, he's mad. So that's what you really want!"

Crow send his brother back to beach. Turn him back into driftwood stick again.

Crow Makes Himself Pitiable, with More Deceits³²

As told by Mrs. Blind Joe

Crow had to walk over a portage, and he kind of starved himself. He came to this village, all weak. He was barely walking. The people saw him coming, a poor starved fellow, coming to the village. So they took him in and cooked for him. He ate that.

They asked him, "Where do you come from?"

And he said, "I come from the south."

And after they asked him all these questions, he said, "Now, I'm going to dance for you, and give you entertainment."

He started to dance, and he danced all day and all night until the sun came up, and everybody went to sleep watching him.

He said, "Put me in the room where the Marten woman's arm is."

In front of the house were two old Bears, one sitting on each side of the door. The fire was outdoors. Crow kept going out all the time, and every time he go in, he take his knife and cut the string from one of those claws on the rattle. He kept doing that, and each time he said, "Oh, I got stomach ache!" as he went in and out.

Finally, by doing that he cut all the strings off, and started to run away with it, and said, "Did you fellows give that arm away?" He stepped right in the ashes, and as he ran through the ashes, he kicked them and scattered them, and they kind of burned the old Brown Bear's backs. [That is why their backs look burned.]

Crow started to run back over the portage that he'd come on. When he got to the canoe, his canoe was upside down, and his nephew, that little Owl, was sleeping there, under the canoe on the beach. Just as he ran out of the portage, he kicked that canoe, and it landed right side up. And he

³² Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

grabbed his nephew by the head and threw him in the canoe. His nephew's eyes were wide open with astonishment. That's why Tree Owls have such big eyes.

The Old Man, the Young Men and the Raven³³

As told by George Blondin

Animals and birds have always told native people where to find game. Wild creatures also used to know whether a sick person would become well again, and ravens have been known to predict disasters and epidemics. So it was important to listen to the animals, even if medicine people frequently had to interpret.

This story is about an Elder who took his sons trapping one fall and had reason to listen to a raven. The three set out from Déline, traveling on an old trail. Toward evening, the old man said, "Let's camp here. There seem to be rabbits, and we can set snares and spend all day tomorrow here, since tomorrow is Sunday." So they pitched their tent and set snares until dark.

The next morning, they had an early breakfast. While they were eating a raven began making a racket outside the tent. The boys knew their father understood the raven language well. But although the raven squawked for some time, the old man didn't say anything.

"Father, I think the raven is trying to talk to us," the younger son said. "What is it saying?" But the old man still did not answer. The boy asked the question again, and yet again. Finally, the old man wearied of his pestering. "What are you bothering me for?" he asked sharply. "If you would slow down a little maybe you could understand simple raven talk. In Déline, you go visiting past midnight and you get into fights over girls. You'd better slow down—you don't know how long you will live." His son didn't say a single word.

"I am the one who should act as you do," the old man went on, "because the raven tells me I will live long, and the raven is right. But just because I know I will live a long life doesn't make me proud or boastful. From now on, you must listen to me!" then the old man interpreted what the raven was saying: he was telling them that on the right side of a long lake, near the trail they had just travelled, there were three moose.

So the hunters packed up their camp and, following the directions given by the raven, set out in search of the moose. They came upon a ridge, and looking down into open country, they spotted a stand of willows. Sure enough, three moose were sheltering in the willows. Taking a good position, the man and his sons shot all three. When they butchered the moose, they made certain to leave enough meat on the bones to satisfy their benefactor, the raven.

³³ Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

TRAVELER STORIES



Figure 4- *The Traveler*, created by Darcy McDiarmid

Fish Camp³⁴

As told by Catherine Attla

This is a story called K'etetaalkkaanee. It is about a man who walked all winter and paddled all summer. It is the longest of the stories that the people used to tell.

³⁴ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In the time very long ago, many people were staying at a fish camp. People were working very hard, putting away fish. There was a boy named Betohoh who slept and slept and slept. Between the short periods of time that he worked, he seemed to sleep a lot. One day he was walking around on the beach where people were cutting fish. Some camp robbers were busy carrying them away one egg at a time.

They kept carrying the eggs away, bit by bit. Then Betohoh began to throw rocks at them. He hit one of them on the leg and broke it. The camp robber flew off with its leg dangling limply in the air.

The summer passed. The boy slept the entire fall. He always slept late. It is said that long ago, if a young person slept late like that, if he or she kept sleeping after everyone else had risen, it was a sign that the young person was to become a medicine person.

That was what was happening to Betohoh. He would get up after everyone else in the family had gotten up.

Before this, his brothers had all left home. They had left one by one and had never returned. He was the only one remaining—he might have had a sister too, but we don't know. At that time, he was the only one who remained with his mother.

Then it was winter. It was after it had become cold. He said, "Mom, I'm leaving."

"What is he talking about? Where is everybody going? Your brothers have all left and not one has returned. What is wrong with all of you anyway? You, at least, should stay with me," she begged him futilely.

He got ready and said, "It will be okay, mom. I'm going to leave anyway." His mother tried to persuade him to stay, but to no avail; he left.





Figure 5- Beaver Man Makes the River- created by Cassidy Everitt

Beaver Man Makes the River³⁵

As told by Martha Taylor

One time long ago, Beaver-Man he's traveling around, a-traveling and a-traveling. The sun he was real hot, and Beaver-Man he get thirsty, you know, real thirsty like when you don't got even spit to

³⁵ *Traveler Storybook*. (n.d.). (J. Beaumont, Compiler) Dawson City, Yukon, Canada: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource.

swallow. He need something to drink real bad. One man he's a-traveling with, he fall down dead he so thirsty.

Beaver-Man pretty soon he say to himself, "What I going to do?" and he start thinking, and pretty soon he say to people he's a-traveling with, "I going to make you some water so you better get ready to drink."

Then Wolverine say, "There's no water. How you going to make some?" And they all get mad at him, think he's crazy, just want to make big show. Especially Wolverine, he's real mad.

Beaver-Man he take and cut willow stick and he tie willow stick to his walking stick with a piece of...how you say in English?...that string you make from caribou. Then he go down in a little valley, at the top end of it, and he say again, "I going to make you some water, so you better get ready to drink."

Then he stick willow stick into ground. Pretty soon lot of water coming out. Lot of, lot of water from good clean spring. All these people with Beaver-Man, even Wolverine, they so happy they put their whole head right in the water.

After that each time Beaver-Man and his people they get thirsty, he go up to top of little valley, stick in willow stick, and water come out. Lot of water. He done this many times. Each spring it make a stream, and after long, long time these streams so many they big enough to make Yukon River.

Making the First Canoe³⁶

As told by Arthur R. Wright

It was summertime, and the Yobaghu-Talyonunh had reached the bank of a great river. It was in line with his travel, and he wished to follow it.

He killed a grouse. As he was eating it, he wondered how he could make something to travel on water with. The breast bone of the grouse suggested the bow and stern of a canoe, and it was from this that he modeled the fist canoe.

He figured out the skeleton for his canoe, and then he started to wonder what he could cover it with. He took pieces of bark from various trees and tried them by floating them and seeing how far they would go without sinking. The birch bark was the only one which went on and on without sinking, so he decided to cover his frame with birch bark.

Then he began to wonder how the seam should be sewn. He called on the different animals to come and try, but their work did not suit him.

³⁶ Wright, A. R. (1977). *First Medicine Man: The Tale of Yobaghu-Talyonunh*. Anchorage, Alaska, USA: O.W. Frost, Publisher.

He called again, and four spirits of water in the forms of women came out and showed him the stitch which is still used in sewing up birch canoes.

The women were very beautiful, and he desired one for his wife. He jumped up and caught one of them as they were sliding back into the water, but she bit him and he let her go.

The first three disappeared quickly, but the last one swam angrily about near the surface of the water for some time, washing away the scent of man.

These creatures have never been seen since, but medicine men are able to communicate with them.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh must next find something to stop the seams so they would not leak. He tried the fats of all different animals and pure pitch, but none would do. Finally he discovered that by mixing pitch with fat the desired result was produced.



Figure 6- Tsù' Wèzhaa and Raven- created by Kimowin Lavallee

Tsà' Wëzhaa and Raven³⁷

As told by Louise Paul

They were stopping someplace on the river overnight,
And they sleep on the little bluff.
Well, he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] was going along the river with this Raven
And this Raven said,
“Whatever you do to me, don't ever try to do anything to me.
If you ever try to kill me or do anything to me,
You won't see no more human being[s],” he said.
“You won't see no more people.”

So one night he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] just try him
[Raven] out.
He pretend he was sleeping,
And they sleep on the bluff on the hillside like this, you know? (gesturing)
He pretend he's stretched out like this,
And he kick that Raven, And he roll over the hill, you know,
And he just splash all over.
So he start off.
Next he hear sound like a big village, you know.
He hear lot of people..
When he stop there he don't see nobody.
He could see people live there,
But he don't see nobody.
But he could see some fish laying on the beach,
you know?
Some fish laying on the beach.

Next, he'd start up again.
Next he'd hear lot of people again.
When he come to that town, same thing.
He don't see no people,
But he see lot of them fish laying on the beach.
So he went back up.
He went back up to where he killed that Raven.
And he start picking [up] that little piece
[piece by piece].
He put it in.

He got his canoe on the beach,
So he put one little piece [in the canoe],
And pretty soon he's [Raven is] coming back to life.

³⁷ Craig Mishler, W. E. (2004). *Hän people of the river*. An Ethnography and Ethnohistory. Fairbanks, Alaska, USA: University of Alaska Press.

He say, "How do you feel?"
He [Raven] keep telling him, "Not yet.
You still got to find some more pieces of me!" (laughs)
So he do that and pretty soon he got almost all the pieces back,
And he say he feel better now.
So he put Raven in the canoe,
And they went back down,
And he asked him.
He (Raven) said,

"Like I told you, you won't see no more people,
human being[s].
What did you see every time you come to the village?"
"Oh, all I see is fish laying, lot of fish laying on the beach."
So he start up with him.
"I'll start up with you," he said.
"I'll start up with you."

And he start up with him.
When they come to the village, it's same thing.
So quiet, and here them fish (are) laying.
He said, "Jump out of your canoe and jump on the first fish that's
laying there."
He jump on there.
He keep jumping on there.
Out of them big fish come the people, you know?
They jump out of it?

That's what Raven done for [him] trying to be mean to Raven
But I don't know if Raven killed people them days.
Raven, they're bad animal in the old days, you know.
They do a lot of things,
And that's all I know about that story.

Where his Older Brother's Skull Came Ashore to Him³⁸

As told by Catherine Attla

He paddled and paddled and paddled downstream. He came around a bend, where he saw someone tanning a skin. He paddled downriver toward her.

³⁸ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

As he approached, the woman who was tanning the skin said, "Hey! No wonder the water turned black. Someone came out from around the bend." Quickly, she removed the skin that she was tanning from the post it was hanging over and rolled it up. Apparently she had been tanning a human skin. Behind her was a smokehouse. He landed there.

"Oh good! There are hardly any people around here. Who is it that came?" she said with great joy. "You're going to eat," she told him. She set out some food for him. There was some dried meat, and he saw some long human hairs dried onto the meat.

He told her, "I stopped and ate upriver, so I'm not very hungry."

"Oh, okay. It's alright then," she replied.

She tried to feed him. She could not do enough for him. He walked back into the woods to relieve himself. A well-worn path led back into the woods. He began to follow it. He walked along.

Then he came upon a little lake. He walked out of the woods and went up to it. He knew about that place, having dreamed of it before. He stood there.

Then he saw a human head coming toward him on the bottom of the lake. It came ashore and approached him.

It said to him sadly, "Oh no! My dear, what are you doing here?"

He looked at it. Then he recognized the head as that of one of his older brothers who had left home before him. That place was as far as his medicine power had brought him. He had been killed there. Apparently many people had been eaten and their skulls had filled the lake.

"Dear one, even though it may not help, when you go to bed, lay a rock over your heart," the head told him.

K'etetaalkkaanee started to walk back to camp. Having seen his older brother's head, he cried. He came back out of the woods to the camp. He went into the smokehouse. What the devil! To his surprise, his canoe was tied to the racks. It was lashed down under the roof of the smokehouse. He sat around, not knowing what else to do.

The day had passed. They began to get ready for bed.

She could not do enough for him, saying, "You're going to be my husband."

After they went to bed, he placed a flat rock over his heart and pretended to go to sleep.

The woman got up quietly. He could hear her begin to sharpen something. Indeed she was sharpening something. Indeed, she was sharpening something. He heard a cutting sound as she said, "Oh, I overdid it." He lay still as he heard her coming back over to him. She stood over him and then sat down on him as hard as she could.

Something squeaked and she fell off him, unconscious. I don't know how she killed people, but she sat on them with something like a knife. She fell over unconscious.

K'etetaalkkaanee said, "Hmhmhmh!" and pretended to wake up. "Oh, is it morning already?"

The woman acted strangely, not knowing what to do.

Later in the morning K'etetaalkkaanee said, "Whew! It's hot! My head hurts. Why is the weather so hot, anyway?" he asked. "I got a headache from sleeping in the heat. Yesterday, when I was paddling downriver, I saw a stream of cold water flowing into the river. Maybe if I drink some cold water it will help," he said. Then he told her, "Why don't you go up there and get some water for me?"

She would do anything for him. "Okay, honey," she said. She grabbed something to put water in, rushed down the bank, went a short distance upriver, and asked him, "Where? Honey, where?"

"Way up there. Farther upriver is where I mean," he answered her.

She kept asking where it was and each time she turned her back, he cut one of those ropes that bound his canoe to the smokehouse. Once again, she said, "Honey, where?"

"Way up there. Up there."

She turned her back to him again and he cut another rope. By that time she was far upriver, still asking where he meant. Then he cut the last rope.

He caught the canoe as it fell. He probably did not have many things to put back in it. He rushed down to the water, threw the canoe into the water, and jumped in.

He heard her upriver, saying, "Hey! My dear husband!" he heard her following him. He began to paddle downriver as fast as he could. "My dear husband, I'm going into the water behind you," she said. He heard the water splashing behind him as he paddled. He paddled as fast as he could a long time.

As he went downriver, he caught some beaver, but he was very tired from lack of sleep. He landed on a sandbar and thought, "I'll just take a quick nap." He fell asleep there and slept soundly. The entire night must have passed. He slept the entire night.

As he woke up, he thought, "Oh, yes! I have to skin the beaver that I caught." He moved. Ugh! Something wet and slimy was sleeping next to him. It was that woman. He was lying under a blanket made of raw, wet beaver skins. How fast she had skinned the beavers and made a blanket! She had done it with magic. That is when he killed her. Then he paddled off downriver again. He paddled along.

He Visits Rabbit³⁹

As told by Titus Bedes

That evening he found another camp—the Rabbit's camp. He studied to see how Rabbit killed men. He had a sharp point on the end of his tail. The man was afraid he was going to kill him. The man studied about it.

³⁹ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

He thought, "I'm going to get a big flat rock. When I go to bed, I'm going to leave it on my chest, to protect my heart, and see what he does to me."

He lay down and pretended to sleep. He (Rabbit) was coming closer and closer to him all the time. Rabbit got on top of him easy and tried to stab him with his tail. He started to poke him with his tail and kill him. The Rabbit broke off his tail. He started to holler.

The man got up quick and said, "You be Rabbit!" He made good animals out of rabbits that time. ("Now people will eat *you!*")

"Well, I'll keep on going," he said. The Rabbits were ashamed and didn't talk to him. The man went on.



Figure 7-Tsà' Wèzhaa and Otter Woman- created by Darcy McDiarmid

Tsà' Wèzhaa and Otter Woman⁴⁰

As told by Louise Paul

Well, he started down the river, and up here, about half way up, up here where they call Cliff Creek, I guess. That's where Otter and Mouse were living there.

Well, like I told you, this Otter got a line across the river. Anybody pass that, she got some kind of bones hanging this end where she live, so she could tell if somebody pass by there. She go out there. She see a man. She bring them in, bring their canoe up, and she try to make them stay. That's how she get hold of them. She make them stay with her. Pretty soon she just kill them and eat them up.

So this man Tsà' Wèzhaa was coming down and he stopped there. Well, first thing she did, she brought the canoe up, and that Mouse is up across from her. You know, they live together, you know, in a wigwam, like in the old days I suppose. The she got this hash. In the old days they make some kind of meat. They pound it up and they call it hash. In Indian they call it jatson. So she give this man some and then she went down the river, get him some drinking water. And this man said, "I don't drink no river water! I only drink creek water!" Just so she go someplace.

And while she went up little ways, every little place she stop, "Is it here that there's a creek?" Chaalaa? Chaalaa? That means "Is it here? Is it here?" And he just said, "No! It's quite a ways up where I passed a creek," he told her.

So she went up around the bend. Then he got his canoe out. She tie it up real good too. That's so he won't get away, that canoe? And here he see that she cut it up with a knife, too! And that Mouse said, "All that hash she gave you, that's made out of human flesh." So she gave him something good to eat, that little Mouse.

So while she's gone this Mouse got her deal out – you know, them days they called awl. That's the only thing they sew with. She sew his canoe up quick-like for him and he took off.

When Otter come back this man was gone so she just took off after that man. And right up here, "Half-Way" they call it, I guess, and there's twenty-one islands up here, that's where he just went all around that island and he got one beaver while he was doing that. So he went to sleep and she found him. She found him sleeping there. So while he was sleeping she tanned that beaver skin that night. She's real active in work too. And when he woke she was sleeping. So he killed her. He killed that Otter that night. Now he got rid of one that eat human being. So he got rid of that one.

⁴⁰ Craig Mishler, W. E. (2004). *Hän people of the river*. An Ethnography and Ethnohistory. Fairbanks, Alaska, USA: University of Alaska Press.

Beaver Man Meets Mink Lady⁴¹

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

Next place he comes, to is that mink woman. Little Beaver comes up to camp, saw that woman. She's smoking skin. He sees that she tans human being's skin -- long arms, long legs, when he comes up she put that skin away quick. But he already see it and know what it was.

"Oh my husband," she say. "I'm just going to look for you." She tries to fool him.

"Since when I'm your husband?" Beaver ask.

"I'll go get water, cook for you," she tell him. When she comes back she wants to sleep with him right away. He looks at her and he sees animals - mink - live inside her.

"I want to eat first," he says, smart like that, "I'll get water." He went out to get water and when he's there he pick up long thin rock. He throw it in fire. He fool around 'til that rock gets hot. As soon as it's hot he says, "I'm ready now." Stuck that rock in her. Her breath stop. She die.

He calls out those animals. "I want you to be weasel, you to be mink, you to be mice," he tells them. He sets those animals free.

After all those animals came out, she came back to life again.

She says she wants to marry him. "You kill all those animals that I use to kill people. I'm pure now."

"No," he say. "I'm not going to marry you."

She's mad so she ran off to try to chew up his boat. Somehow he fix up his boat and go. She start to swim after that boat just like mink.

"When you row, that wave behind your boat will catch you," she say. He lose her somehow in the dark, when it's dark he row to the islands. He lost her, I guess. He went to bed on some kind of island.

⁴¹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.



Figure 8- Smart Man and the Bears- created by Tiffany Taylor

Smart Man and the Bears⁴²

As told by Johnny Fraser

Well, after that pretty soon the Smart Man came to a bear.
That bear said, "You marry my daughter!"
Well, that man thought, "My goodness, I don't know!"
Well, finally he made up his mind, and all right, he parried the bear's daughter.
Finally that bear told his daughter to go up on the hill.
"We want to kill the man," he said.

⁴² McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

Well, the Smart Man came back.
He had been walking around somewhere.
The old man said to him,
“Oh look at the bear up on the hill!
Let’s kill it!”

It was really his daughter who had changed into a bear.
Well, the old man gave the Smart Man something to use, so that the man couldn’t kill his daughter.
But the Smart Man still had his own bow and arrow hidden down his back.

Well, the Smart Man went there on the hill.
He came close to the bear.
He hit the bear with the thing the old man had given him. It broke.
My goodness, that bear chased her husband!
She wanted to kill him.
[Then Smart Man killed her with his bow and arrow].

Well, the [old man] bear was really mad, because the Smart Man had killed his daughter.
He began to chase the man.
And he chased him all over.
Finally the man came to some water, and he jumped into it. The bear couldn’t follow.

The bear had chased him all over, but he didn’t catch him.
The bear said to himself that he didn’t know what to do.
Then the bear hollered for some kind of bird—Nts’ilrua.
It is a big bird.

The bear told the bird,
“That man there killed my daughter.
I want to get hold of him.
You drink up this stream until it is all dried up.”
The bird said, “All right.”

He started to drink.
The lake went down until it was dry, but they didn’t see the man.
He was hiding in the moss.

After he had drunk up all the water there, that bird was just lying there all full of water in his stomach.
Now all the birds began to walk around eating.
They were walking around and eating the things in the moss.

Well the bear started to look for the man.
He was getting close to him.
The man was hiding.
Smart Man caught sight of a little bird [a snipe, with a long beak]. He told that bird,
“You hit that other bird right in the stomach!
Right in the middle of the stomach!”

So that bird flew around and flew around the big bird full of water.
That big bird said, "Keep away from my stomach.
I'm full!"
Well, that little bird—just one tap—and the whole works came out.
All the water rushed out of the big bird.

The bear got to the beach. He just made it to the shore.
Well, the bear gave the man up then.
He went away.
That Smart Man became the beaver.
Today the beaver is the smartest animal.
That man was the smartest man in the world at that time.

Outsmarting Silver-Tip⁴³

As told by Arthur R. Wright

After Yobaghu-Talyonunh had killed the Otter woman, he returned to the river which he had left.

Soon he rounded a bend and saw a house just below him. Straight out into the stream from one side of the bank was a fence or fish trap. On the bank outside the house, a mouse woman was motioning him to pass by. He wondered why she did not speak and why she wanted him to not stop, but as he approached the camp he noticed on the fence skeletons of many men.

He immediately hurried on. Before he had gone far, someone caught the back end of his canoe and pulled it ashore.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh soon discovered that he had been made prisoner by the Silver-tip bear man. An enemy of mankind, he used to eat the men that he captured.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh resigned himself to his fate for the time being, as the Silver-tip had decided to keep him prisoner.

To pass the time, Yobaghu-Talyonunh made arrows.

Now, for arrows, one must have pitch, feathers, and sinew, so one day he said to Silver-tip, "My friend, where do you get your sinew for arrows?"

"Way over on the big flats to the east," replied Silver-tip. "I always get what sinew I need there."

⁴³ Wright, A. R. (1977). *First Medicine Man: The Tale of Yobaghu-Talyonunh*. Anchorage, Alaska, USA: O.W. Frost, Publisher.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh took his quiver and bow and started.

As he approached the flat, he saw what looked like a great mound. Soon he saw that it was a great serpent. He watched which way the wind blew and kept to the leeward. He could not tell which was the vital part of the beast, and was at a loss to know how to attack.

As he sat wondering, a Mouse came by.

“My friend, help me,” he called. “Go find where the heart of yonder thing lies, and I will repay you. Pull all the hair from around the spot and that will serve me as a mark.”

The Mouse went off and came to the Serpent. After locating the place where he could feel the heart beating, he fell to work gnawing off the hair.

The Serpent moved. “What is this I feel about me?” he hissed.

“Oh, I’m just gathering a little fur to keep my children’s feet warm,” said the Mouse.

After he had made a fine visible target he ran off.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh’s aim was sure. The Serpent gave a great leap and lay still. He was dead. Yobaghu-Talyonunh then went to the Serpent and pulled the required sinews out of the back.

He then returned to Silver-tip.

“Hum. He brought them home,” thought the Silver-tip.

The next day, Yobaghu-Talyonunh asked where he could get some pitch.

“Down towards the south, beyond those spruce,” said Silver-tip.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh went to the south and saw a tree in the distance which seemed to have what he needed. As he came nearer, he saw that the whole was a live mass of boiling pitch. If any man touched it, he would be dead.

He shot the pitch with arrows, but they only stuck.

Then he got an idea. He gathered thick branches of pitch. He found that when the pitch came in contact with the cold wet branches, it hardened and broke off.

He gathered what he wanted and went home. “Hum. He has brought it home,” thought Silver-tip. Yobaghu-Talyonunh was a little too smart. “If you want feathers,” said Silver-tip, “to the North is where I get mine.”

So the next day Yobaghu-Talyonunh started in a quest of feathers. Up on a great rock he could see an Eagle’s nest. The birds were nowhere in sight, so he climbed up and found two young ones waiting for their mother and father.

“Where are your father and mother?” he asked. The baby birds said they had gone off a long time ago and had not returned.

“Who will tell on me when they return?” Yobaghu-Talyonunh asked.

"I will," said the elder.

"How about you?" he asked the younger.

"I will say nothing," he answered.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh took the older bird and threw him over the cliff.

Then he asked for the signs of the parents' returning.

The little bird said that sleet always preceded the mother and hail the father.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh told the little bird not to tell his parents that he had been there and to say that his brother had fallen over the cliff in his sleep.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh went and hid himself behind a rock.

It wasn't long before it began to sleet. The mother bird appeared, holding in her talons the body of a man.

"Where is your brother?" she asked.

"He fell over the cliff in his sleep," said the little eagle.

"What is this I smell?" she asked.

"He fell over the cliff in his sleep," said the little eagle.

"What is this I smell?" she asked.

"It must be that which you are carrying," the little bird replied.

As she lifted her head to look around, Yobaghu-Talyonunh, whose aim was true, struck her with an arrow and she fell over the cliff.

Then it began to hail, and the father bird appeared, carrying in his talons the body of a man.

"Where is your mother?" he demanded.

"She flew past me," said the little one.

"Where is your brother?"

"He fell over the cliff in his sleep."

"What is that I smell?"

As he raised his head to look around, Yobaghu-Talyonunh aimed true, and the father eagle fell off the cliff and rolled to the bottom. Then Yobaghu-Talyonunh went up to the lonely little bird and told him that what his parents had brought was not fit to eat.

"Wait, I will get you something."

He went up the hill and killed ptarmigan, mountain squirrels, and young lambs. He brought them back to the nest and made the eagle promise that when he was strong enough to hunt for himself he would eat nothing else.

The little bird kept his promise, and to this day eagles still keep that promise. Yobaghu-Talyonunh gathered some feathers from the big birds and returned to the bear.

“Hum. He has brought them home,” Silver-tip said to himself.

The bear was beginning to get impatient to eat his prisoner, so he asked his two daughters to put on the bear skins and walk around the berry patch on the mountainside.

That day Yobaghu-Talyonunh wanted to hunt, and it was not long before he saw the two bears.

He asked Silver-tip to let him have his arrows for the new ones, thinking he would have Yobaghu-Talyonunh at his mercy later on.

But Yobaghu-Talyonunh had hidden in the back of his garment two good arrows in case of some emergency.

He started after the bears. Finding only the rhubarb arrows in the quiver, he used his two good arrows to kill the two bears.

Silver-tip had thought that with the aid of his two daughters and with Yobaghu-Talyonunh having no arrows, he could kill him easily. But now he found he had to deal with Yobaghu-Talyonunh alone.

When Yobaghu-Talyonunh found that he had nothing with which to protect himself, he started to run through water to throw off the scent from Silver-tip. But he could not get away from him. As he stood peering in the water, he saw a Frog and gruffly asked the Frog to drink up all the water. The Frog began to drunk and drink, and grew larger and larger, and the lake began to disappear.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh did not know what to do, but soon a little Sandpiper came by and he asked him if he would go and puncture the Frog.

The little Sandpiper teetered impudently back and forth and said, “Anah,” which means “I don’t want to.”

Then Yobaghu-Talyonunh promised to give the Sandpiper a bead necklace if he would. That is how that white collar came to be around the Sandpiper’s neck.

The Sandpiper said he would try and went pecking along nearer and nearer the Frog.

“What are you doing?” asked the Frog.

“I’m getting some little things for my children to eat,” he said.

When he came close to the Frog, he threw back his head and thrust his beak as far into the Frog as he could, and the water rushed back into the lake.

Silver-tip rushed to the lowest end of the lake and started to tear up the ground to make an outlet to drain the lake. At the head of his outlet he set a trap. He stood and watched so that he could see Yobaghu-Talyonunh if he tried to climb out of the lake. If he tried to swim under the water through the outlet, he would be caught by the trap.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh realized he couldn't get out onto the land so he got as near the trap as he could by swimming under the water. As he was waiting and planning, the Mouse came near him on the bank.

He asked the Mouse to pluck him some hay.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh tied the hay in a big wad and put it on the end of a pole. Pushing this ahead of him, he swam under the water towards the trap. When he came near enough, he pushed the hay into the trap.

Silver-tip thought he had Yobaghu-Talyonunh. He shouted triumphantly and started pulling out his trap.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh slipped under and away, and Silver-tip was much chagrined at finding nothing but the hay in his trap.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh ran quickly through the brush until he came to a swift river which he couldn't cross. He saw a Fox running on the other side, and called to him for help.

The Fox extended his tail across the river, and Yobaghu-Talyonunh crossed on it safely.

"My friend, when the Bear comes to the other bank, put your tail over for him to cross on, and when he is half way over, move your tail so he will fall into the middle of the river. He will soon be here as he is following me."

The Fox waited, and soon the Bear came and called to the Fox for help, and the Fox did what Yobaghu-Talyonunh had told him to do. The Bear was half way over when the Fox did what Yobaghu-Talyonunh had told him to do. The Bear was half way over when the Fox moved his tail, and Silver-tip fell into the river.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh escaped while the Bear was getting out of the river.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh had not gone very far after escaping from Silver-tip when he heard someone calling him. It was a spirit voice saying that something was following him.

He looked back and saw a Bear!

He hid until the Bear came close to try to attack him.

Then Yobaghu-Talyonunh jumped between two trees that were growing very close together. The bear tried to follow, but he was too big to squeeze through, and Yobaghu-Talyonunh struck him with his club and killed him.

It was a black bear. To this day the Indians have no fear of black bears, but the Silver-tip is much dreaded.



Figure 9- *Tsà' Wëzhaa Meets Bear, Eagle Moose and Mouse*- created by Darcy

Tsà' Wëzhaa Meets Bear, Eagle Moose and Mouse⁴⁴

As told by Louise Paul

And then he start from there down this way.
That's when he got to Ford Lake.
And then he went downriver and stopped at Ford Lake.

⁴⁴ Craig Mishler, W. E. (2004). *Hän people of the river. An Ethnography and Ethnohistory*. Fairbanks, Alaska, USA: University of Alaska Press.

That's where Bear is living.
That's down here below Eagle.
And that Bear he kills men too.
He kill human being and eat them.

So he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] got there,
And this Bear said--
He got a daughter that he want some good man
to marry--
So he said, "You gonna be my son-in-law!"
So he told that man to stay there,
And first thing he said--
He want to make himself a bow and arrow, that man.
So he [Bear] told him [Tsà' Wëzhaa] to go out and go up.
"Go out and get something to make a bow and arrow with."
So he went out to get that feather, you know,
For bow, for arrow?

That's what I told you about yesterday when he killed them
Eagle(s) too,
And he let one little Eagle female,
That little girl there,
And he give her good meat after he kill the mother
And the father Eagle,
And that little boy Eagle.
And then he give some good meat to that little Eagle,
That little girl Eagle?
He said, "From now on you live on just this kind of meat.
Don't eat human being again!" he told her.
And she said, she will.

So he left that, and then he came back with this feather,
And that Bear said, "Gee, how can you get those feather
And things like that?"
Them animal(s) are bad animal(s).
He [Bear] think he gonna get rid of that man some way,
Through these other bad animal[s]?

And then next he [Bear] said,
"There's a moose out in the lake.
There's a moose out in the lake,
And you could get your sinew from there."
For that string on the bow?
So he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] went out there too,
And this moose is just skinny and scrawny-looking moose,
And he kills people too, I think.
So he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] just don't know how to get to that moose.
So there's a little Mouse around there.

So he told this Mouse.
He said, "Can you kill that moose for me?"

And that Mouse said, "How can I do it?" (laughs)
So this Mouse said, "If you tell me how to do it, I'll do it."
So the Mouse went up there,
And he went in his, from behind, you know? [through his anus]
The moose is laying down or something like that, I guess.
And he got inside of him [and killed him].
That's where you could see where the heart that big artery is.
In the moose there's little print-like.
They say that's a Mouse track! (laughs)

And he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] got that one too,
And he got his sinew right there.
And then finally he got that one too,
So he got his bow and arrow made.

Tsà' Wëzhaa and Snipe⁴⁵

As told by Louise Paul

That's two deal now he got—a feather and a sinew.
Then he got to get pitch, you know.
I don't know what for,
But he got to get pitch, to pitch something together.
[Probably to help attach the feather to the arrow.]
So he went out to get pitch, spruce pitch.
And when he went out there all the pitch just go
like this on the tree,
You know? (gesturing).
Just something fierce, I guess.
He got kind of scared, but he got hold [of] a stick,
And he just knocked them down all over, you know.
And he stopped that (pitch) from doing that too.
And he brought some of that back,
And that Bear said, "Di do'iy!"
That means, "How does he get by with those things?" you know.
"How do he get them things?" you know.
He don't expect this man to get them things.

He [Bear] thought sure he [Tsà' Wëzhaa] might get killed by one of those deal[s].

⁴⁵ Craig Mishler, W. E. (2004). *Hän people of the river*. An Ethnography and Ethnohistory. Fairbanks, Alaska, USA: University of Alaska Press.

And then finally, he [*Tsà' Wèzhaa*] got that [pitch] too,
So he got his bow and arrow made.
And then he said, "O.K. now."
He [Bear] told that man, he said...
He's going out with that man, you know,
To where his daughter stayed.
He pretend that, I guess.
He said his daughter is staying someplace,
So they went up together.
So, that's one little place [in the story] I don't understand it too well.
So he went out with him.

And this other Bear tried to get after him,
But he killed that other Bear that he pretend was
his daughter?
He killed that one too.
That's his daughter.
She pretend [to be] this other Bear.
But he killed that,
And then he got mad, this old Bear,
So he got after him,
And then this *Tsà' Wèzhaa* he got real scared,
So he just start running from him, you know?
So he got down there [to] Ford Lake.
He got in that lake.
And then that Bear he told the Frog,
"Drink all that water for me."
So that Frog start drinking that Ford Lake.
That's a big lake!
Pretty soon that Frog keep drinking water,
drinking water.

Pretty soon that lake is going dry, so he got scared, this man.
And then he [Bear] told a Snipe that went by.
He told that Snipe, he said,
"If you can do it,
Would you hit that Frog in the belly for me?"
And he said he'll try, so he went around the Frog,
And Frog look at that Snipe.
He said, "did somebody tell you something to do to me?"

And that Snipe said, "What you talking about?
I'm looking for something to eat for my little ones.
I'm not trying to cause trouble!"

So, while he [Snipe] got chance he just hit that Frog right in the
Belly.

All that water came out.
During that time while that Frog drinking that water, you know?
He [Bear] just tear up all that moss around Ford Lake.
If you go down there [to the lake] you could see it's just
Torn up like,
Just like the stories go!
How things goes like that?
I wonder who's the smart guy to tell such a story like that?

And then he don't know what to do,
So he just went, and then that Frog, you know,
That Snipe hit that Frog in the belly,
So all the water splash out again.
So best he can do he went to the outlet [of the lake],
You know, tried to get out to the river.
And then he [Bear] was down there already too,
With his, what they call net.
You know, what they call gill net.
He got that down there already.

So he [Tsa' Wëzhaa] put something in his coat,
And throw that in there [in the net], you know.
While he [Bear] dig that out,
He [Tsà' W'ëzhaa] just went by that net.
That's how he got past that Bear.

But he got the worst Bear that killed people too--
That other one that other Bear, you know,
hat he claimed was his daughter?
That's the one he got rid of.
There he fixed two animals now.



Figure 10- Bird in the River- created by Kimowin Lavallee

Adventures of the Old Man⁴⁶

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

The “Old Man” (rock) in the Yukon went down the river where the bear, when bears were men, was fishing. He put his canoe on this side of the river where no one could see it from a point above where the bear was. Then he made a circuit on foot around the bear and reached the river lower down.

The old man then swam up the river, like a king salmon, to the bear’s house, where the bear was spearing salmon. The bear tried to spear him for a salmon, but he grabbed the spear point, broke it off, and swam to his canoe and hid the spear point under the bow. Having disarmed the bear he now knew that he was safe. So he got in his canoe and went down to the bear’s house to call. He concealed the fact that he had broken the bear’s spear, but the bear believed that he did it, nevertheless. The bear wanted the old man to marry his daughter. The bear pointed to a mountain about a mile away where

⁴⁶ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

there was no timber, and said that it was a good hunting place for bear, since a bear came up there every day.

The old man went to the woods to get material to make some arrows. The bear had everything fixed dangerous about there, so that when a man touched a tree stump it would fall on him. The old man was cautious and would touch a stump and dodge when it fell. Then he secured the wood for arrows from the fallen stump.

Now he wanted some feathers and the bear took him to a place said to be good for getting them. Here were big eagles that would kill men. The old man went to an eagle's nest in the big tree, where there were two young ones. He asked them which one could talk most. One said that he could talk most, and would tell the father and mother eagle about everything, so the old man killed him so that he could tell.

He asked the other young eagle how he knew when his mother was coming, and was told that she always came, and was told that he always followed a gust of hail. Then the old man hid under the nest with his spear. Then came the snow and the mother eagle appeared, carrying the upper half of a man. She asked the young one, "Where is your brother?" and he said, "It was too warm here and he went down where it was cool." She said "I smell something here; what's the matter?" The young eagle said, "You smell that half a man;" but the mother eagle said, "I smell something different." Then the old man under the nest speared the mother eagle, piercing her from belly to crop. Then came the hail, and the father eagle followed and asked the same questions as the mother.

He said to the young one, "Where is your mother?" and the young one answered, "She went down to look for brother." The father eagle brought with him the lower half of the man. Then he said "I smell something," and the young one replied the same as to his mother. The old man was watching from under the nest, and he speared the father eagle too. This father eagle would kill any man he saw. The old man saved the young one. He got enough feathers to make his arrows. When he came back the bear said, "You're all right," which he always said.

The old man wanted some pitch to stick the feathers to the arrows. The bear as usual led him to a dangerous place, where he told the old man there was plenty of pitch. Here the old man found a lake of pitch boiling like water. The old man wouldn't go near the lake. With this switch he threw the pitch all over the spruce trees about him. The spruce trees therefore had never yielded pitch, but have done so all over the world ever since. Then the old man gathered enough pitch from a spruce tree and returned. Now he wanted sinews to bind the feathers and heads to the sticks of his arrows.

The bear led him to a moose lick where there was a bad moose. The moose didn't have much flesh, but was mostly bone and skin. His hide had such stiff hairs that it was hard for an arrow to penetrate. This moose would kill every man he saw.

There was lots of high grass about there and the old man crept up to the moose on hands and knees through the grass, keeping out of sight of the moose. When the old man got near the moose, he stopped and wished for a mouse to come along. He told the mouse to go to the moose and chew the stiff hair off behind the left shoulder. The mouse went to the moose and asked to chew the hair off behind the left shoulder, to use for his nest to keep the young warm. The moose refused, but told him

he could chew the hair from his hind quarter. The mouse insisted that he wanted the hair from behind the left shoulder because it was soft and warm.

So the moose allowed him to take it. As soon as the hair was off, the old man shot the moose through this spot into the heart, killing him. Then the old man got his sinew from the spinal ligaments of the moose. Then he returned to the bear camp and finished making the arrows. The old man made the arrows with birch bark heads because the bear said the birch bark was the best. The old man knew that this was false, but he did it to please the bear. The bear said that upon the mountain where there is no timber a bear came every evening and that the old man could get it. The bear was accustomed to kill men by this ruse.

He set his daughter up there dressed in a bear skin, and when a man came near she would hold him till her father bear killed him. The old man concealed bone arrow heads in the back lock of his hair before starting. The old man and the bear started out to hunt bear. The bear said, "Walk slow" but the old man ran away. As soon as the old man approached the hill, he saw the other bear and shot twice with his birch bark pointed arrows, but they didn't penetrate. The bear when hit, instead of running away, as ordinarily, came toward the old man, who pulled the bone arrow head out of his hair and shot the bear with it. He now saw it was the bear's daughter, for she hollered, "Father, that man hurt me." The bear said to her, "Catch hold of him," and as she tried to catch him she died.

Then the old man ran away and the bear chased him all day. Then the old man ran into Ford's Lake. (*Calico Bluff, six miles below Fort Egbert, on the Yukon, is called "Long Point" Clavath, pronounced "Klay-vay," and Ford's Lake, near by, is called Clavathmon, meaning Long Point Lake.*) The bear couldn't catch the old man, so he told the frog to drink up all the water in the lake, and the frog drank it all. As soon as the water was gone the old man burrowed into the mud. The bear went all around digging in the mud to find the old man. As soon as he got near the old man, the old man wished for a snipe to come along and it came. He asked the snipe to go and hit the frog twice in the belly. The frog asked the snipe, "Did someone ask you to come?" The snipe said, "No, I am hunting for something for my children to eat."

As soon as the snipe got near the frog he hit it twice in the belly and flew away. Then the water all ran back into the lake. The bear now was angry, and made a fish trap, which he put in the creek, from Ford's Lake to the Yukon River, to catch the old man. The old man knew this and made a mud man, which he pushed ahead of him, swimming down the creek. The mud man went into the trap, the bear pulled it up, and the old man swam down to the Yukon and down to the bear's house below Calico Bluff, where he got his canoe and went down the Yukon, and the bear never saw him anymore.

Beaver Man Meets Sheep⁴⁷

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

After that Beaver Man goes along, meets Sheep. Giant Sheep. That one's got sheepskin on stick hanging way up there.

"What's that?" say Beaver Man.

"My dog's stuck up there barking, throat getting dry."

"Where?" ask Little Beaver. "I can't see."

"I'll show you."

So they go up that mountain to peak. He look over edge of hill at that skin. He knows it's just a skin anyway, knows that Sheep wants to kill him. That Sheep wants to shove Beaver Man over, down other side. Sheep looks over hill, to show Beaver where to go. Beaver push him.

That Sheep's wife waits there with an axe. She thought it's Beaver Man, so she killed him. When Beaver Man came down, she's crying.

"Can't help it Grandma. He goes to show me something and he falls over." He lies.

He tells her, "Don't eat people. Eat grass, stuff like that. Don't get too big. Just stay that big, like you are." So he left her too. That's the end.

So that's how Little Beaver cleaned up that River. Maybe that's Yukon River.

Fishhook⁴⁸

As told by Catherine Attla

Then he paddled alone. He paddled and paddled downstream. As he came around a bend, he saw someone fishing with a fishhook at the far end of the straight stretch ahead of him. He pulled himself back around the bend and quickly paddled ashore. It was to be the first of many times that he would pull his canoe up onto the bank. He turned himself into a big pike. The big pike is called *taah dleton* because it rests, motionless, under the surface. He turned himself into a big pike and slid into the water.

⁴⁷ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

⁴⁸ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

He swam downriver and grabbed the man's fishhook. You know how you jerk a fishing line, pulling the fish's head out of the water. This man jerked the pike's head out of the water. The pike yanked the fishhook from the line and, *doo'* swam upstream with it deep under the water. He went back to where he had left his canoe and turned back into a person. As he went up the bank to his canoe, he wondered where he was going to put the hook.

K'eteaalkkaanee had realized that the other person knew what he had done. It became apparent to K'etetaalkkaanee that this person was a medicine person. He did not have any place to hide the fishhook. He knew that the man would search for it, having seen him. He took a board from his bow piece, which had just been made. He removed a board, put the fishhook into the groove, and put the board back over it.

He dragged the canoe down the bank and into the water. Then he continued to paddle downstream. He paddled to the man. The man was sitting on the bank. K'etetaalkkaanee landed and dragged his canoe onto the beach and went up the bank to him.

The man said, "Yes, I thought I saw him." He looked closely at K'etetaalkkaanee. "Yes, I jerked his face out of the water," he said.

"Friend, I don't know what your talking about," K'etetaalkkaanee replied.

"Don't think that you're going to fool me. I aw you. You have to give me back my fishhook. Friend, you're going to starve me if you keep it," the man told him.

"Friend, I don't know what your talking about," K'etetaalkkaanee replied.

"I saw you," the man said.

Afterward the man fed him. After the meal, the man began to search him all over, through a leather parka that he was wearing and under all of his clothing. He searched through the few things that K'etetaalkkaanee had in his canoe.

K'etetaalkkaanee told him, "No, friend, I don't know what your talking about."

The man was not angry with him. Perhaps they were afraid of each others power. "You have to give it back to me. You're going to starve me. What will I do without it? Friend, I have to take your canoe apart," the man told him.

"Friend, what am I going to do without the canoe?" K'etetaalkkaanee asked him.

"No you will not go past here with my hook. I saw you."

They argued back and forth for a long time. Then the man figured it out and began to take a piece from the bow of the canoe. He removed a board, and there was the fishhook.

"I knew it. I really saw him," he told K'etetaalkkaanee. "My dear friend, now you can paddle downriver," he said to him. "I have found my fishhook," he said.

K'etetaalkkaanee must have spent the night with him. I don't know. Then he left in the canoe once again.

How unlikely to be hanging by the Neck like that⁴⁹

As told by Catherine Attla

Then he continued to paddle downstream. He paddled and paddled downstream. Again, he came out from around a bend. At the far end of the straight stretch, a weir had been built across the river. As usual, he quickly paddled ashore. He dragged his canoe back into the woods and began to sneak down toward the weir. He crept down to where the weir was. A well-worn path led up the bank.

He walked up to the weir, gave himself a nosebleed, and hung himself by the neck from one of those posts of the weir—posts whose thick ends were in the water. While he hung there, his nose bled profusely. Blood flowed down from him.

Soon he heard some footsteps. Someone came out of the woods to the bank. Meanwhile, the blood was running off him.

“Hey! What an unlikely thing to be hanging by the neck from! Didn’t the man wonder who hung it up there for him?” K’etetaalkkaanee heard him yell. “What the devil!” the man began to tell excitedly. He walked over to K’etetaalkkaanee and took him down. He examined K’etetaalkkaanee carefully. He looked dead. Wasn’t he breathing? He was bleeding.

The man tied straps around the body and began to carry it back into the woods. As the man carried the body, it was facing him. He had bundled it up and put it back across the portage. How strong he was!

K’etetaalkkaanee grabbed a willow. K’etetaalkkaanee held onto the willow while the man jerked on him. Finally the man gave one big jerk and K’etetaalkkaanee let go of the willow. The man fell down hard, and as they landed, K’etetaalkkaanee dug his knee into him. Apparently he was trying to wound him.

What the devil! The man jumped back up and took off his pack. He looked at it. It jerked a little bit. He began to tickle K’etetaalkkaanee. He looked him over and began to tickle him. K’etetaalkkaanee’s body jerked a little.

“What does he think is so funny?” the man said. Once again, he put the body on his back. Bent over, he continued to carry him quickly across the portage.

As before, K’etetaalkkaanee grabbed a springy willow. The man began jerking him again. The man stepped back and gave one big jerk as K’etetaalkkaanee let go. The man fell down hard.

Ouch! My back! K’etetaalkkaanee dug his knees into the man’s back again. Ouch! That time he was barely able to get up. He looked at him again. He took the pack and hit it against the ground repeatedly to see if it would move. The body jerked a little bit.

⁴⁹ Attla, C. (1990). *K’etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

“Huh! What does he think is so funny?” the man said. Once again he put him on his back. He continued to carry him back across the portage, but this time he could hardly manage to do it, his back hurt so much. He carried him back to the door of a house and threw him down. Children came running out of the house.

“Hey, Mom, Daddy caught something.” Some of the children rushed back inside to their mother. The man said, “My child, go in and get the club.”

They rushed back in while K’etetaalkkaanee thought, “I hope the club disappears.” He made it disappear.

“Dad, where is it?”

“Ask your mother!”

They asked their mother, but she didn’t know.

The bundle with K’etetaalkkaanee in it was sitting outside. *Doo’*, K’etetaalkkaanee had made the man become careless. “It’s down there in the house.” He said angrily, as he rushed inside. The children were all inside the house too. K’etetaalkkaanee broke the straps that had bound him, and the club he had made disappear appeared in his hand. He hid outside by the door. He heard the man inside throwing things around, saying, “It was right here!”

The man rushed back out, hunched over, and K’etetaalkkaanee hit him over the head. He hit all the others over the head, one by one, as they came running out. Apparently one of the girls was in puberty, so she was staying in the woods away from the house when he killed the others. This girl was staying in a lean-to under a spruce tree. The girl’s mother had not come back to her for a long time. Her mother had not brought her any food, so she began to cry. She began crying. She cried and cried and cried. As she cried, her nose began to run. She wiped the mucus from her nose. She rubbed it on the spruce tree saying, “May you be something useful from now on.” Evidently it was to become spruce pitch.

That is why, when my grandparents had a fish trap set for blackfish, when Flora and I were little but were able to understand, they would tell us, “Don’t chew spruce pitch, because you have something fresh to eat.” In the fall, too, when they had a fishnet in the water, when there were fresh fish, they would tell us, “Don’t chew spruce pitch.” The pitch came from a girl in puberty. For that reason, we are not supposed to chew pitch when we have fresh fish. They used to watch us closely for that, especially when they had traps set for blackfish. Usually when you fish in the late winter there is not much food. “Grandchildren, do not chew the spruce pitch,” they would tell us, because this girl wiped it on the tree from her nose. You can see it where it runs off the trees. It is used for sealing canoes, and this is evidently the reason that she said, “May you be useful from now on.”

She cried. Soon her head grew onto the tree. Apparently her head became a spruce burl. These burls are called “*yoo’en ledoy tlee*.” That is what she was to be. That is what she became. While this was happening, K’etetaalkkaanee took off again downriver. He paddled and paddled downstream.



Figure 11- *He Visits the Gnats*- created by Darcy McDiarmid

He Visits the Gnats⁵⁰

As told by Titus Bedes

Next he went to the Gnat's camp. They were the smallest people he ever saw. He waited there. Those people had a canoe made out of dry leaves. He say down and talked with them; he ate with them. They were good people, so he stayed a little while.

There was a mouse swimming across the lake.

⁵⁰ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

The people yelled, “There’s a moose coming!” Everybody went to their canoes. About fifteen of them tried to spear it with porcupine quill spears. But the waves were too big.

So the man went out in his canoe and picked up the mouse.

Lots of people got killed from his waves. So he picked up the mouse alive in his canoe, and he picked up the rest of those Gnat people and took them ashore.

He said, “Now I’m going to go. You remember me, my Old Testament, when I leave you people.” He saved them.

Before he died, Ch’eteetaalkane (Ch’etitalqani) told the people, “My story has got to be a long story. It has to take eight days’ time. When you start you have to tell the whole thing. You can’t pick around.”

Little People⁵¹

As told by Catherine Attla

He paddled and paddled downstream. It was late in the summer. Once again, he paddled around a bend to a fish camp. He was almost there. It looked as if the place was bustling with activity, but he could not see anyone.

He paddled toward it and went ashore.

Then he saw that they were tiny people. There were so many of them that they looked like a flame moving around.

He landed on the beach. They were everywhere and were saying, “Hey! Remember that the *nots’etneegeey* crosses here every day. Maybe he could help us with it. Feed him,” they said. They were very happy to see him. I don’t know what they fed him. It was like dust. He stayed there with them.

“Okay, the sun is almost up at the place where the *nots’etneegeey* usually crosses the river,” they said, rushing about.

Soon a caribou came out to the river on the opposite bank and started to swim across. “There it is! It’s going to cross the river again,” someone shouted.

It was swimming across. It looked as if the caribou would turn around if it saw him. K’etetaalkkaanee got into his canoe and paddled up to it. What did they think they were doing following

⁵¹ Attla, C. (1990). *K’etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

him? Many of them jumped into their leaf canoes and covered the water. K'etetaalkkaanee went up to the caribou and shot it with an arrow.

He began to pull it ashore. There were so many of them. He purposely began to bounce the canoe as he paddled, on the pretext of dragging to shore the caribou that he had tied to the canoe.

"Hey! Watch out for his waves," they said as they began to capsize. They were tipping over and drowning. There were a lot of them. They were all yelling.

He pulled the caribou ashore. The place seemed to be alive with little people on the shore as he worked on it. A woman kept telling him, "My daughter has developed a taste for fat."

He tore a piece of lacy membrane from the stomach and threw it at her. He threw it over her on purpose. While he was working he saw that the membrane was moving around for a while. Then it stopped.

He continued to butcher the caribou. Soon they began to say, "Where is she? Where is she?" they began to pick up the fat. I guess that is how they found out what he had done.

"Hey! He threw the membrane over her. He threw the fat on top of her. He did it on purpose," they started to say. "Kill him." I don't know how they expected to do that when they could not even kill a caribou. "Kill him. He killed a very precious woman. Kill him!" they clamored. It was noisy.

He pretended to run away.

They shot little arrows at him, and it was as if he were being covered with quills. He threw himself forward and lay on the ground, pretending to be dead. He lay there.

"Burn him! Burn him!" they said. It was fall and the grass was mature. They chopped down grass and piled it on top of him. Then they lit the grass but it burned on top without harming him.

He lay there as if he were dead. They had burned him. They could not do anything else with him, he was so big.

Soon it was dark, being early in the fall. That was why the caribou had been on the move. It was dark and they had all gone, so he got up. He began to walk. A great horned owl landed on a tree near him and he shot it down with an arrow and took it back to the village.

The little people were feasting on the caribou.

He built a fire to cook the owl. He put it on a roasting stick, including the head.

"He's alive over there! He built a fire! He's alive over there!" they said.

K'etetaalkkaanee said, "Come eat. Everybody come eat," he told them. This was after he had drowned so many of them. Some of them gathered around him. The people who wanted to eat came to him. Some sat on one side of the fire, and some on the other. The owl was beginning to cook with its head on the cooking stick.

Soon one of the eyes popped out and everybody on one side of the campfire died from its steam. Then the other eye popped out. Evidently he had meant for that to happen. That is why he put

the head on a stick as well. Everybody on the other side of the fire died too. The few left began to yell, "Kill him!"

He put his canoe back into the water and pretended to flee. They all followed him in their canoes, all the children and everybody.

The water was black behind him, there were so many of them. Then he began to make waves by bouncing up and down in his canoe. There were big waves!

"Watch out for his waves," they said. They shouted to each other. They were capsizing all around him. Soon they were all gone.

Then he killed the remaining ones on shore. He did not even save one person.

Apparently they were little people. Little people. I don't understand the word *k'oyeedenaa*, which is used to refer to the little people. It is old language from the Distant Time stories. He had killed all the little people. My grandpa said that he had done this so that they would not be around today.

Camp Robber⁵²

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

The camp robber is a slate-colored Alaskan jay, well known for its habit of stealing food from camps.

When all animals were men the camp robber was a medicine-man. One time the people had nothing to eat, and they asked the medicine-man to get them some food. For six nights a different man each night dreamed to find a way to get something to eat. The camp rover was the last and sixth man. He dreamed and called all the people together to bring their snares with them. He made a pack of the snares and put them on his back. The people made the snow in a big heap. Around this he went, chanting and saying, "Bye and bye meat will come."

Then he reached into the snow heap and pulled a caribou's head out by the horns. He did not kill it, for it was not a real caribou; only a spirit. So he painted the horns and tail red, with red ochre, and let it back into the snow heap. Next day they got lots of caribou, and the one with red horns and tail was amongst them. That is why an Indian never kills a camp robber when he steals grub, but lets him go because he helped them in the days when he was a medicine-man.

⁵² Osgood, C. (1971). *The Han Indians*. New Haven: Department of Anthropology Yale University.

Rabbit⁵³

As told by Catherine Attla

He left once again. He walked and walked and walked. Once again, he walked for a long time. He came upon a place where there was a strip of land between two lakes. While taking a shortcut across it, he came upon a rabbit trail. He removed the foot straps from his snowshoes and set a spring –pole snare. Then he resumed walking. He came upon a house. As was his custom, he went to the entryway, brushed his feet, and went inside.

A woman and her children were inside the house. I don't know whether her husband was there or not. They started to feed him. It did not taste like good to him when he ate it, but he ate it anyway. Apparently it was sticks.

Rabbits eat them. They eat only willow shoots and willow tips in the winter. They ate and sat around. Then one of the woman's sons got up and began to get dressed. He put on a rabbit-skin parka, as well as rabbit skin boots, a rabbit skin hat, and rabbit-skin mittens. Everything he wore was made from rabbit-skin. Then he went outside. He was gone a long time. He never returned home. It became dark. He still had not come home when they went to bed. The mother of the boy who had left began to sing.

"Early yesterday, my little son went out for sandbar willows. The night passed without him. Be coming home, be coming home. Early yesterday my little son went out for sandbar willows. The night passed without him. Be coming home soon, be coming home."

When would she ever stop? She sang through the entire night. *Kk'oonootseeeyh* are the small willows that grow on sandbars. He was not able to get any sleep because of her singing. Finally he said, "Hey! When is that one singing over there going to stop?"

Suddenly, the woman stopped. He heard thumping noises going out the door. In the dark he heard some things hopping out the door.

Finally, he went to sleep. Because he had not been able to sleep before that, he went right to sleep. I don't know how long he slept before he woke up.

He thought, "Oh! Yes, I remember." He got up and looked around. Nobody was there. He looked around in the kitchen area.

All that was left were some rabbit droppings. He also found some places with willows on them where the leftover food from supper had been. That was why he had not felt full the night before, even though he had eaten a full meal. He had nothing to cook.

Then he thought, "Oh, yes, I set a spring pole snare yesterday with my snowshoe straps." He thought, "Maybe I'll go check it, even though I may not have caught anything." He went to check it. A

⁵³ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

rabbit was hanging in the snare. It was one that someone had cried for all night. Apparently it had been snared early in the day, soon after it had gone out. He took the rabbit to the house and cooked it. He ate the rabbit and started walking again.

The Chickadee People⁵⁴

As told by Catherine Attla

He continued to walk and walk. He had been walking for a long time. He walked and walked. He was walking where he had already journeyed in his sleep. It was as if he were backtracking. He was walking along. Way off in the distance he could see a trail of smoke extending upward. He began to walk toward it. He walked up to it. As usual, he went up to the entryway, brushed his feet, and went inside. Many people were in the house. A big family of small people was living there. A man and his wife and their children lived there.

“Hey! There are no people around here. Where did he come from?” they said happily.

The man said, “Honey bring in some food. We have a visitor.”

The woman rushed out. She was gone for a while. She came back with a scraper that had on its edge some scrapings from a skin. Apparently those scrapings were the food she was bringing in to cook.

This is why, in the fall when people catch the thing with the black skin, they hang up the skin with the inside turned outward. I saw my grandpa do that. The chickadees clean it up well, and store it as their food supply.

Then he thought to himself, “Oh my! I’m really hungry. Is that all she’s going to cook?”

The woman must have seen the expression on his face, and said while she was preparing the food, “Oh dear! Their cousin came, and I overdid it.” She was saying that there would be plenty of food.

Saying that, she put a pot with the scrapings in it over the fire. Soon the boiled scrapings expanded. My! When he ate, he had more than enough. The evening passed. They all went to bed. He went to bed.

The night passed. As usual, he woke up and thought “Oh, yes!” He got up. As usual, the house was still. He looked around. All that was left in the house were bird droppings in the dish where the food had been.

He went outside. He saw many chickadees around the base of a spruce tree. To this day it is like that. There are always a lot of winter birds around the bases of spruce trees.

He must have eaten something and then left.

⁵⁴⁵⁴ Attla, C. (1990). *K’etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Willow Grouse, Spruce Grouse, and Ptarmigan⁵⁵

As told by Catherine Attla

He walked and walked and walked, spending the night here and there. He walked for a long time.

He walked long a river following the bends. When he came around a bend, he saw many people down at the end of a long stretch of the river. He walked toward them. They were playing a game of kickball. Many people were there. The sight was impressive. He went to that place and stood at the edge of where the people were.

A man walked up and said to him, "Friend, did you just arrive?"

"Yes," he said, "I just arrived."

"Come, friend, you will stay with me," the man said to him.

"Okay," K'etetaalkkeenee replied.

He went up the bank with him while the kickball game was going on. They were all talking but he could not understand them, they were talking so fast.

Then the man said to K'etetaalkkeenee, "Friend, you will eat," and brought him into his house.

Some woman were in the house. They began to cook. They were cooking something that looked like dried fish. One of them said to the other, "Friend, we didn't go up to the treetops to do our usual thing."

K'etetaalkkeenee wondered, "What do they catch in the treetops? They must be talking about some game animal that they catch up in the trees," he thought.

Then the cooking was finished. He ate but not long afterwards he was hungry again. He was hungry. It was as if he had never eaten.

Then everybody went to bed. As usual, he went to bed. A lot of food was left over. The night passed and he woke up. The house was still when he woke up in the morning. He looked around. Nobody was in the house. When he had gone to bed, the house had been noisy with conversation. He thought he heard some noise outside.

He went out and, to his surprise, up on the treetops, willow grouse, spruce grouse, and ptarmigan were all clucking. Those were the people to whom he had come. That was why they had talked so fast and were such fast runners. It had been as if they were flying around. You know how fast ptarmigan are.

⁵⁵ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

He picked up his bow and arrow, and shot one down from a place where they were all in a group. Strengthened by eating it, he left again.

Horned Owl⁵⁶

As told by Catherine Attla

He walked and walked and walked along. He had walked a long time. It was dusk and he was walking among some big spruce trees. Somebody was walking toward him, carrying some spruce grouse on a stick. K'etetaalkkeenee said to his friend, "Oh, my dear friend, how long has it been since I've seen another person?" but his friend did not answer. K'etetaalkkeenee looked at him and he appeared to be smiling. "Well, he looks friendly," K'etetaalkkeenee thought. He looked at the spruce grouse. "Well, friend, I guess we can make a fire near here and spend the night."

The man just nodded.

K'etetaalkkeenee thought, "Oh, okay, this person must not be able to speak." They cut some spruce boughs to sit on and lie on, and they made places across the fire from each other. They settled down to spend the night. They took the spruce grouse that were on the stick and put them over the fire. The spruce grouse were roasting. K'etetaalkkeenee talked to this person, realizing that he could not speak. The man made signs to him. K'etetaalkkeenee was thinking, "That man has no mouth, although he has a nose and eyes."

The spruce grouse finished cooking, and the man passed the stick across to him. K'etetaalkkeenee said to him, "Am only I to eat? How can I eat this all by myself?" he tore off one wing with some meat and offered it to the man.

The man pointed to the fire. Apparently that was the way he ate. Then K'etetaalkkeenee grabbed his knife and jumped across the fire to him and made a cut where he thought the man's mouth ought to be.

Suddenly, the man said, "Oh, my dear friend!" K'etetaalkkeenee rubbed saliva on the cut and the man said, "Oh, my dear friend made a mouth for me." K'etetaalkkeenee must have found out that the man did not have a hole in the rear either, and it is said that he made a hole for him there too.

My! The man began to eat. Apparently he had no mouth before. That is why the owl talks with its lips pressed together. It really speaks like this. It sounds as if it has something stuffed into its mouth. That is the way it speaks.

My! The man began to speak with him. They spent the night there, strengthened by the spruce hens. They talked all evening and fell asleep.

⁵⁶ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

He woke up in the morning. As usual, there was no noise. He looked around and did not see anyone; it was daylight. An owl was sitting up on a tree nearby. Apparently that man had been meant to become a great horned owl. It was the only thing in the area, sitting up there on the tree. Once again K'etetaalkkeenee left. That bird is also known as *nodeneeyee*.

Owl⁵⁷

As told by Arthur R. Wright

He walked some distance and sat down to rest. He saw about him, in the trees, numerous snares made of willow and wondered who could have made them.

He took off his clothes and stuffed them full of grass, putting a strip of fat down the breast of his mummy. He then struck the head through one of the snares and hid nearby to watch.

Soon he heard someone coming, and, looking around, he saw an Owl man.

When the Owl saw what he had in his snare, he began to chuckle to himself. Seizing a short stubby knife from his belt, he went up to the mummy and cut into the breast to see how fat his catch was. Yobaghu-Talyonunh was so surprised and disgusted that Owl should gloat over a human victim that he killed the Owl.

Ever since, owls have had a great respect for man.

Otter⁵⁸

As told by Catherine Attla

He walked and walked and walked. Again, he came to a very big lake. He walked across the lake. He could see board-snowshoe tracks all around. Many people had been walking back and forth wearing board-snowshoes. They were snowshoes made of birch boards that had been bent up at one end. They

⁵⁷ Wright, A. R. (1977). *First Medicine Man: The Tale of Yobaghu-Talyonunh*. Anchorage, Alaska, USA: O.W. Frost, Publisher.

⁵⁸ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

are called *dekenbes oyh*. The only lacing was near the foot. My late grandpa said that he had owned snowshoes like that.

K'etetaalkkeenee walked toward the lower end of the lake where there was an outlet, toward where there were still more tracks. He continued to walk on the lake toward the outlet. As he got closer, off to the side he saw steam rising. Usually, when there is a large fire, smoke rises. But this was different; when there is a slow fire, what comes out looks more like steam. Steam was extending upward from the house. As usual, he went up to the entryway, brushed off his feet, and entered. The fireplace had wet wood in it. The wood was hissing. There were children in the house.

He asked them, "Where are your parents?"

"Our parents went out hunting early this morning," they replied.

Then he said, "Gosh! Aren't the children cold? There's only wet wood in the fire." He went back outside. There was a lot of dry wood around the house. He cut some of the dry wood, brought it in, and piled it on the fire. The fire started blazing, whereas the wet wood had barely been burning before. Soon the children were shivering from the cold. Their teeth began to chatter. In the meantime he had warmed up. He was sitting by the fire. He must have had something to eat.

Some time had passed when he suddenly heard the sound of water running off something. Water was running. By the doorway, out of the *ben't'oyeh*, some people came with grayling in their mouths. Apparently they were the parents.

They threw down the fish and said, "Hey! Why are the children freezing?" they jumped back into the water where they had come up. He heard the water sloshing down below. They came back up with some wet wood that was burning. Once again it started to hiss.

They cooked the grayling and everyone began to eat. They ate the grayling. More were lying there.

He was so cold that he went to bed. He lay there. Before he knew it, the night had passed. He had gone to sleep listening to these people snorting with their noses.

He did not know how much time had passed before he woke up. He woke up. The house was quiet. He looked around. Everyone was gone. He looked over at the place where he thought they should have been sleeping. The floor was all messy, apparently with their excrement.

I don't know why it is, but woman are not supposed to use the word *belaazone*; they say *bezeye* instead. It may be because otters have bad toilet habits. If we call an otter by its name, our children will have that problem. Also, otters have some spirit power. Our children may become like that and have bad toilet habits. That is why they kept otters away from women. Women never skinned them. That is also why women never tanned the hide until after they had stopped bearing children.

K'etetaalkkeenee looked at the place where the wood had been sizzling. He went back outside to get some dry wood. Then he built a fire outside. Apparently they had turned into otters. They had been transformed and had all gone into the water. That is why no one was around. He ate the leftover grayling for breakfast and kept the fire burning for a while. Like the others, they had been transformed. Once again, he left.



Figure 12- Beaver Man and the Moon- created by Cassidy Everitt

Beaver Man and the Moon⁵⁹

As told by Jimmy Scotty James

After that he is just walking around. And he meets somebody else again. And it doesn't look like a person. It's white – it looks kind of like a ghost.

⁵⁹ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

The person talks to him fine and says, "Sit down quietly grandchild." And so they were camping together. Beaver man began to camp with him. He's a pretty good man, but he is going to do something to Beaver Man just the same.

And when they were camping, they were drying their moccasins. They had gotten wet. They were drying everything. Their skin pants were hanging around the fire.

And Beaver Man knew the man was going to do something to him. And before that Beaver Man had gone to sleep, he got up and changed his clothes! He changed that man's moccasins to where his own had been. And he changed his own clothes to where the man had been hanging his.

Now you are going to hear about the Moon. The Moon got up when it was pretty nearly morning time and he made a fire. And he thinks that he will burn up the clothes of the Beaver Man. So he grabs his own clothes and he throws them into the fire and burns them up. Here he burned his own clothes!

And afterwards, when they were getting up, they were looking for their clothes. "Those are mine," he says. "Those are my clothes," Moon says to Beaver Man.

"Look at them! They're mine. That's yours you burned," says Beaver Man.

The Moon says, "By gosh, you've got to give me back my clothes! If you don't I'm going to burn you up!"

That Beaver Man had some extra clothes and he gives them to him. And the man was glad. "Pretty good!" the Moon tells the Beaver Man. "Thank you very much, you give me my clothes!" He says, "I'm going to do something for you. I'm going to give you something. When you want game just get little spruces where the gum comes out. And you chew it when you're going through the bush. And you are going to see what I give you!"

Beaver Man takes that short little spruce gum and he chews it. And he goes just a little ways off when he is chewing the gum. And he sees two lynx right on the spruce standing facing each other. He hits them with his bow and arrow. He puts one arrow into each.

Hawk Owl⁶⁰

As told by Catherine Attla

He walked and walked and walked. He walked for a long time. He came upon a place where a woman was living with her children. As usual, he went up to the entryway, brushed off his feet, and went inside.

⁶⁰ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

He saw that the woman was home. Three children were home with her. He asked the woman, "How are you? Why are you home alone?"

"Oh, this morning their father went hunting. He went hunting again," she told him. "He went hunting in the woods across there," she said.

"Oh okay," he replied.

Then she fed him. They were sitting around. The children kept running outside. Suddenly, one of the children rushed back inside.

"Mom, we heard dad yelling in the woods across there!" the child said.

"What is he saying?" she asked him.

"We heard him say, 'Something is dragging me into the woods!'"

Everyone rushed outside and listened. She heard her husband say, "Help! Help! Something is dragging me into the woods!"

She started shouting, "Let it go! Let it go!" in the meantime, I guess, K'etetaalkkaanee just observed what was happening. He did not even try to help. Then they heard nothing more.

After a while, she said to the children, "My children, go after your dad. Here's a dish." How presumptuous of her! What if he had not caught anything? She gave each of them a dish. Well I guess they were hungry. They all went across a river or lake and into the woods. They followed their father. They saw some blood on the trail and ate it.

Some time passed. The man came home with his children. His forehead was bleeding. He came home with his face all scratched up. He returned with his children and brought home a little piece of fat. Apparently he had thrown an axe into the rabbit's shoulder blade, and it got stuck.

You know how there is a layer of fat between the shoulder blades? He threw the axe through its shoulder blade while hunting it. When he pulled his axe free, the fat came out on it.

The rabbit began to drag him while he held on to the axe. It was when he was being dragged around that he yelled. He yelled, "Something is dragging me back into the woods!" that's when his wife became worried and told him "Let it go!" Then he tried to free his axe because he could not make a living without it. Maybe it was his beak. When it finally came out, there was some fat on from between the shoulder blades. That is why the rabbit has a hole on its shoulder blade to this day. It is where the axe went through. The man put the fat down somewhere. I don't know what K'etetaalkkaanee was doing around there, but he stepped on the fat, and it stuck to the bottom of his foot. He went across the room and lay down with his legs crossed.

The man said, "Honey, we have a visitor. Why don't you make some ice cream with that fat?" She began to look for the fat where he said he had put it. It was gone. She looked for it in vain.

"I put it right there," the man said.

Then one of the children said, "Mom! It's stuck to the bottom of the visitor's foot."

Oh my! She must have taken back that little bit of fat.

K'etetaalkkaanee said, "Ah, I'm just not myself. How could I have done that?" there was just a little piece of fat.

The woman began to make ice cream with it. Soon it rose and became large. That is why Indian ice cream increases in volume if it is made correctly. The ice cream became so big that it almost rose above the sides of the pan. She made it.

Meanwhile, the children had all become ill. They were lying around, sick. All of them were ill.

"Your children have become sick," the woman said.

He said, "Oh my! What happened to them?"

"I don't know!" "How do you feel?" she asked them.

"We feel as if we have eaten too much, they replied."

Their mother asked them, "What did you eat?"

"We ate the blood of the game that had been caught," they answered. It was at the kill site.

The man said, "Oh my dear children, they went across where I was dragged and my forehead was scraped." He realized that they had eaten his blood. "Honey, go outside and bring in the thing with which I have been raised, even though it may be to no avail," the man said.

The woman went outside. Some time passed then she came back in carrying some dried mice feet that were tied together. She gave them to her husband. He hit each child on the back of the neck with them. He probably said something at the same time.

Some time passed. Then the children started to vomit. They all vomited. Then they were better. Apparently they had become sick by mistakenly eating their father's blood.

The children became well and the night passed. Then they must have all been transformed, but I don't know. The story is called the hawk owl story, so they must have been transformed.

Marten⁶¹

As told by Catherine Attla

Once again, he was walking along. It was almost midwinter; he had been walking that long. He had walked until midwinter. He walked and walked. He was walking through the woods.

⁶¹ Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Behind him, someone said, "Hey! Something walked around here. Follow it, everybody, follow it," he heard someone say.

He thought, "What is that? What kind of person is that?" he walked in a big circle and came back to where he had started. While he was doing that, he could hear the man following him and talking.

He heard him say, "It came back to its own tracks. Set a snare for it, fellas."

The marten began following K'etetaalkkaanee around in a circle. He followed him and followed him. "Don't ruin it, fellas."

It looked as if only one person's tracks were following him when K'etetaalkkaanee came back on his own tracks.

"Don't ruin it, fellas. Set a snare for it quickly," he heard the voice say. He listened to it. Then it sounded as if it had stopped, so K'etetaalkkaanee took off his parka and stuck a rotten birch log up into it. He put into the chest area some fat that he had been carrying. He made the marten parka look like a man.

"Okay fellas, start following it again," the voice said. Once again, K'etetaalkkaanee heard the man following him. Again, he walked in a big circle. K'etetaalkkaanee came to the snare and into it he put the parka that he had stuffed with rotten birch. Then he turned himself into a hawk owl and landed on a nearby spruce tree.

Then he heard the man coming closer. Wherever the man went, K'etetaalkkaanee could clearly hear him talking constantly.

There it was in the snare! The man said, "My goodness! Why didn't they do that in the first place? What were they doing, ruining it?" the man went over to it. He split the chest open with a knife. The fat fell apart. Then he said, "Okay, wait. Let it cool off. Let it cool off, and let's make camp."

He talked as if many people were with him, even though he was the only one there. Then the man cut a big pile of wood. Then he made places around the fire for people to sit. "Okay, fellas, now make some cooking sticks while it's cooling. There's no reason to rush things," he said, talking to himself. Then he got some sticks and began to sharpen them. "This one is going to be for cooking the foot. This stick is for the hand, this one for the head, this one for the arm, and this one for the other arm." He did this for a long time.

While the man made cooking sticks, the hawk owl sat up in the tree, laughing. The man said, "Oh, that poor thing. Is it laughing because it thinks it is going to eat?" he did not realize that he was talking to K'etetaalkkaanee.

That is why people these days say, "Just like a hawk owl," when someone teases others. That is also why the raven teases the hawk owl while it flies. It swoops down over the hawk owl and makes noises like laughter. It is because of what the hawk owl did in this story. It teased someone. Other birds also tease the hawk owl because of that. The robin teases it the most. The robin will laugh at it and tease it. It will fly towards it as if to hit it and then fly towards it as if to hit it and then fly off again. They say that camp robber is another one that does that. It is the hawk owl's own fault because it teased the

marten. People will say, "Just like the hawk owl that teased the person," because of the hawk owl's behavior in this story.

K'etetaalkkaanee laughed and laughed at the man.

Then the man made sticks for each side of ribs and one for the stomach too. "This is going to be for the heart, this one for the lungs, this one for the liver, and this one for the kidneys." He made sticks for every part of the body. Then he planted them all around the fireplace and got everything ready.

After he finished making the sticks, he said, "Where are you fellas going to relieve yourselves?" then he broke a trail over to a spruce tree. He knocked down the spruce tree and walked its length on top of it. Then he jumped into the snow and rolled around. Then he jumped back on the spruce tree and began to walk back and forth on it. That is why people set traps for marten on spruce trees that have fallen. He knocked down another spruce tree and walked to the end of it. Then he began to go back and forth from tree to tree. He came back into the fire place.

Then he said, "Okay fellas, are you ready?" the toilet had been made. "Okay, fellas, butcher up what we caught. Cut it up now." The chest was cut in half, and the fat was visible. He went back over to it. He thrust the knife deep into it and cut downwards towards the stomach in order to skin it. He cut into it and the rotten birch fell apart in two pieces. He looked and looked at it. The only thing in the parka was a rotten birch log. He stalked talking. Then he started saying "Hmh! Hmh!" Quietly, he walked back over to the fireplace.

He looked at it. Then he lit the fire.

He said, "Oh dear! Where can we cut off a piece of ourselves next?" he said that because if he were to leave the sticks there without cooking on them, there would be too much starvation in the future. Saying "Yee! Where can we cut off a piece of ourselves next?" he cut a piece of meat from his own face. He rubbed with saliva the place from which he cut the piece, and it healed. Then he diced the piece he had cut off. He put a piece on each cooking stick. The fire began to blaze while he did that.

Then he said, "Listen! Listen! A forest fire is coming! A forest fire is coming!" He began to jump back and forth over the fire. He jumped back and forth over the fire. He jumped back and forth over it. Suddenly, he was pierced by one of the cooking sticks. He landed short and was impaled on it. A big male marten left that place. It took off, running on the trees upon which the man had walked back and forth.

Wolverine⁶²

As told by Catherine Attla



Once again, he walked and walked and walked. He had been walking for a long time again. He came upon a trail that looked as if people had been moving on it. He began to follow the people. He walked on their trail. Then he came to a place where someone had been chopping on a beaver lodge. He looked at it. He might have been hungry and looking for food. He stood there and looked around. There was a wolverine's tooth lying on the lodge.

He thought, "Hmm, I wonder where that came from." Then he thought, "Oh, maybe he was the one who started to chop the beaver lodge, then quit." He took the tooth and put it in his pack. He followed the trail. He kept following the trail on which the people had traveled.

Then he saw a fire up ahead, and he went to the camp. He stopped there. It was a family with many children. Some women were also staying there. He entered the house and sat down by the fire.

The man said, "Cook something for the visitor!" then the woman began to cook.

One of the woman said, "Your grandpa there just broke his axe. That person will starve us," she said.

They fed him and he ate. The man wanted to ask a favor of him and that is the reason he had said, "Cook something for the visitor."

K'etetaalkkaanee ate and sat around.

"What are we going to do about this axe that's been in the family so long? It broke on me. What are we going to do without it?" the man asked.

"Oh! Now that you mention it, when I was walking today, I came upon a beaver lodge that someone had been chopping on. I found a wolverine tooth there."

"Hm! Is it me that he is calling 'the one who messes his bed and clothing?' I am the person who keeps the path from the door of my wives' house yellow." What he meant was that he provided for his wives so well that the path was yellow with grease. That was his way of saying that he fed his wives well. He said more after that.

K'etetaalkkaanee said, "Oh! What am I talking about? I'm not myself because I'm hungry." He gave the tooth to the man.

The man said "What good is it to me like this? Why don't you just look at it, even if you might not be able to fix it?"

⁶² Attla, C. (1990). *K'etetaalkkaanee The One Who Paddled Among the People and Animals: The story of an Ancient Traveler*. Yukon Koyukuk School District and Alaska Native Language Center College of Liberal Arts, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

“Okay, but I don’t know how I can fix it if you can’t. I’m the person known for snapping the thunder with a snare,” K’etetaalkkaanee said. That was his way of saying that he was too strong to work on a small thing such as the wolverine’s axe.

“Well, what good is it to me like this? Look at it anyway,” the man replied. K’etetaalkkaanee went back to him and looked at it.

K’etetaalkkaanee put it back in place. He wrapped a string around it very tightly and broke the tooth—on purpose of course.

The man said, “Hey! It must have taken a lot of power to do that! How about using that power to fuse it together?” the man said to him.

Then K’etetaalkkaanee blew strongly on it and mended it. It was as if it was never broken.

“Thank you, thank you very much! I knew he could do it; that is why I asked him,” the man said.

Then K’etetaalkkaanee spent a good night with them and filled himself with food. The man must have become a wolverine, but the story does not say that. I don’t know when he became a wolverine. All the others had always become animals and left, but it does not say that. He was a wolverine though. Then K’etetaalkkaanee left once again.

The Light in the Man’s Eye⁶³

As told by Arthur R. Wright

It was still wintertime. After Yobaghu-Talyonunh had traveled some distance, he saw ahead of him a mound of ice and snow. On it there were sharp pointed bones very cunningly concealed so that anyone passing and slipping accidentally would fall and be badly injured. He wondered who could be using these to catch game. He thought he would wait awhile, and, thrusting one of the sharp points through his coat, he pretended to be dead.

The Wolverine pinched him to make sure that his victim was dead. Yobaghu-Talyonunh never moved. Then the wolverine tied his hands and feet and slung him up and carried him off to camp.

The Wolverine laid Yobaghu-Talyonunh before the fire.

By carefully opening one eye, Yobaghu-Talyonunh could see that the Wolverine had quite a large family. Yobaghu-Talyonunh now used his newly acquired powers. He wished that his hands and feet might be untied. Soon the Wolverine came over and untied them.

⁶³ Wright, A. R. (1977). *First Medicine Man: The Tale of Yobaghu-Talyonunh*. Anchorage, Alaska, USA: O.W. Frost, Publisher.

Then he noticed a knife very near his hand. He very carefully worked it over to his side and pushed it under him.

The mother and father wolverine began to quarrel about the lost knife.

In the meantime one of the little ones on the other side of the fire kept watching Yobaghu-Talyonunh. He noticed Yobaghu-Talyonunh's eyelids flicker and saw that the firelight was reflected in his eye.

"My father, what is that light I see there, right in the man's eye?" shouted the child.

The Wolverine, being already very much irritated and tired, told the little fellow to shut up and hit him with a stick.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh saw his chance, and jumping up, killed the family except the oldest girl who fled into the woods and climbed a tree.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh went after her and tried to shoot her with his arrows. But through the mysterious power that is attributed to the Wolverine, the arrows fell to the ground without harming her. Yobaghu-Talyonunh tried fire, but he failed with it also. So he cursed her and said, "May you and your children continue to steal men's caches so that men may hate you and see your destruction." To this day the Wolverine is the most despised of animals.



Figure 13- Little Wolverine Girl- created by Kyle Dickson

Tsà' Wëzhaa and Wolverine⁶⁴

As told by Louise Paul

He was coming along this road.
Everybody is out hunting,
So he's out hunting too.
But he knows something [is] ahead of him.
So I don't know.
He's a very smart man, they said.
This Tsà' Wëzhaa, he's a smart man.

So it's kind of warm,
So he got his gloves in the road,
And he's kicking his gloves along.
Pretty soon they went over the glacier.
So he looked down.
He could see where that glacier is just deep, like this,
And there's three prongs like it's thick enough.
That Wolverine trap, you know,
Where they kill the human being?
If they don't know, they fall down there.
They get killed.

So this Tsà' Wëzhaa he walk down there,
And he make his nose bleed, you know?
He got that all over that,
And he put that prong up inside his skin, his parka?
And he just lay there, pretend he's dead.
Pretty soon this Wolverine come along
And this Wolverine he's got a lot of little ones too.
And he was coming along, so he said—
He was just happy he got this man, you know?
So he put that man on [his back].
He start packing that man home.
Well, that man is kind of heavy for him too,
And every time he jumped why he grunt-like, you know,
And that man can't help laughing.

So he throw that man down.
He said, "Seems like you're living."
Seems like he's living, he thought to himself.
So he tried to hit that man, but he don't hit that man.
He say, "If I hit him, he gonna be all bloody,

⁶⁴ Craig Mishler, W. E. (2004). Hän people of the river. An Ethnography and Ethnohistory. Fairbanks, Alaska, USA: University of Alaska Press.

And I don't want to do that.”
So he got him home finally, and them little [Wolverine] kids,
When they see their Dad bringing that man,
Packing that man home,
They start bringing in wood, you know?
And then he ask his wife, “Where is my knife?”

Well, this man [Tsà'Wëzhaa], in them days they're
Medicine people, medicine man.
Some way he [Wolverine] can't find his knife to cut the man up with.
And then he start get mad with his wife because he can't find his
knife.

And then them little kids they were out on the tree.
They could climb trees,
And this one little girl Wolverine, the smart one,
She called her Dad.
She said, “That man is looking at me!”

He's looking at them little one,
And he didn't know that little, little Wolverine,
That little girl was looking at him.
And then he (Wolverine) said,
“If you get the prongs into you,
You won't be looking at nobody!”
He told [this to] his daughter, his little daughter.
He should have hit that man then,
But then he said, “If them prongs stick into you,
You won't be living now,” He told that little girl.

So pretty soon him and his wife they start fighting too.
They can't find the knife.
He blamed his wife,
And just when he start to fight his wife,
That man jump up and hit him [Wolverine] with that hatchet he got?
And then he killed that [Wolverine] woman.

Then he start killing off them little Wolverine.
That little girl he can't do,
He can't, he can't kill her.
He got hold [of the] axe.
He tried chop that [tree] down,
But that little Wolverine keep saying, “Let the axe get dull!”
And it gets dull.
He can't even cut with it,
And when he start to build fire,
So she'll jump down or something,
Just so he [can] kill her?

She start peeing and everything, you know. (laughs)
So she put the fire out that way.

So finally he said,
“I gonna let you go, but whatever you do,
Don't eat human being again from now on.”

And that little girl said,
“Whatever you do from now on,
When you put your things away,
Be sure to put them away good that I don't get into them!”
You know nowadays Raven, Wolverine,
If you cache something away,
I don't care how high or anything,
They'll get into it.
That's why she said that.
“If you put anything away,
Be sure you put it away good.”
Now that's the end.

Smart Man Freezes the Man-Eater who had Mosquitos in his Head⁶⁵

As told by Johnny Fraser

After that the Smart Man started to go again.
He found the same kind of man again—one who was eating people.
He found one man like that.
And he chased the Smart Man.
The Smart Man said, “Wait a while.
You are going to kill me.”
It was open there.
They were on opposite sides of a creek.

It was cold winter.
That Smart Man said, “I am sure you are going to eat me, but I want to see you strike-a-light first.
Throw that thing into the water, and then you can have mine after you kill me.”
Then the Smart Man thanked him for it.
Well, that man threw his strike-a-light into the water!

⁶⁵ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

Well, then this Smart Man said, "The hell with you!"

The Smart Man ran away.

Then the man-eater chased him around after that.

He chased him around and chased him around.

Finally the cannibal got cold.

And he stayed on one spot on the ice.

The Smart Man kept his eye on the other fellow all the time.

And he stayed on one spot on the ice.

The Smart Man kept his eye on the other fellow all the time.

And he stayed away from him.

The other man froze to death there.

"Well," the Smart Man thought, "that man is frozen."

He went up to him.

The man was frozen solid.

The Smart Man wanted to find out what was the matter with the other man's brain.

He opened up the brain.

It was full of mosquitoes inside.

They all flew out.

Well, he found out!

He and Fox Chase Away the Giant⁶⁶

As told by John Silas

Fox told a story. He said, "There's a big man down below here, a Giant. He's got a good fishing place in the ice that he stole from me."

Ch'eteetaalkane went to the river with him and made a hole in the ice himself. But there were no fish there. He gave up and kept on going down the Yukon.

By that time it was just beginning the winter freeze up. He thought he would stay there until the freeze up. He didn't have much to eat, so he went back to visit Fox once in a while. He hadn't seen that Giant yet.

Ch'eteetaalkane said, "Are you going to get a nice fishing place?"

"No, he took the best place away from me."

"Well, the only thing to do is to fight to get that fishing place. Scare him away."

⁶⁶ Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

They went together to hunt for the Giant. The big fellow was awfully wild. He didn't like to see anybody.

Ch'eteetaalkane asked Fox, "What's he afraid of? Did you ever hear?"

"Yes, he's afraid of Chickadee."

"I'm going to make a noise like a chickadee, and you holler like a fox." He (the Giant) was scared of foxes, too.

Ch'eteetaalkane went in the woods and sounded like the way Chickadee sings. Fox on the other side hollered like a fox. That big fellow got up and listened. He looked around and got scared. Fox and Chickadee were getting closer all the time! Pretty soon he started to run home. They didn't see him at all.

So they started fishing on top the ice there. They caught fish, and then they went back to Fox's camp and ate.

Yamoria Lives with the Beavers⁶⁷

As told by George Blondin

Yamoria was a great man of power. He could live with animals and communicate with any animal.

The great medicine man once decided to stay with the beavers for a year. He made himself into a beaver and went to live with a beaver family in early fall. Yamoria was powerful enough to work on the beavers minds so that the animals would accept him. He wanted to find out how the beavers make their living, so he could report it to the people.

As soon as the beavers saw Yamoria, they welcomed him. "Stranger, stay with us for the winter," they said.

The beavers worked very hard, and Yamoria also had to work for his board. One day the beavers said, "Let's repair the house,"

They dove into the water to get wet mud, which they mixed with logs and large stones to make the beaver house so strong that bears or wolverines couldn't claw it down.

All day long, the beavers brought young willow and birch, making a big pile of food in front of the house for the long winter to come. Since the teeth of young beavers are not strong, the mother and father did most of the cutting. They worked all day like human beings, and slept during the night. The female gave strict orders that the small beavers were not to wander far from home. She also told them not to eat too heavily, because they had to save their food for winter. If the beavers weren't careful,

⁶⁷ Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

they could starve before the spring. The female beaver often spanked the young ones if they didn't listen.

In the fall, beavers eat as much as they can, to get fat for the long winter. But Yamoría discovered that they are careful about how they do this. The male beaver said, "Let's go to another lake to eat every day, and save the food from our own lake for the cold winter."

Another thing Yamoría found out is that the beavers make resting places for themselves along the shore of the lake, underneath its banks. They use this space to come up from underwater and eat when there was nothing to do except wander around under the ice, the beavers would sometimes play hide and seek, using the holes they had dug around the lake.

By about May, the beavers needed fresh food. They made a hole in the ice with their sharp teeth, and one beaver carefully looked at the world above to see if there were any bears, wolverines or bad men around. If the lookout saw no enemies, the beavers climbed out of the hole and went ashore, where they travelled far into the bush to eat fresh willow or birch. They had a deal with certain birds, who would warn them if an enemy approached. Robins and herons were the best lookouts. If a heron climbed a tree and squawked to beat hell, the beavers knew an enemy was nearby. Then they gathered close to their house, or went inside. Even today there are always herons and robins squawking at you when you hunt beaver, and the animals often get away.

After his year with the beaver family, Yamoría went back to join the Dene and told them how beavers take care of themselves for the long winter. He pointed out how smart these animals are to plan ahead for a while year. "If the beaver family doesn't plan well, starvation sets in before the spring," he told the people. It was an important lesson for the Dene.

The Tail-Man and his Children⁶⁸

As told by Arthur R. Wright

The Fox made friends with Yobaghu-Talyonunh and invited him into a hut for a meal. As he ate, Yobaghu-Talyonunh put pieces away for his wife. The Fox noticed and asked him in a whisper if he had a wife, adding the warning that the Tail-man was no good and to watch him.

Despite their caution the Tail-man overheard, and he at once went out to the lake and began to shout, "Someone's wife is out here!"

Whereupon all the men ran out. Then the fox exclaimed, "Oh, my friend!" and followed the rest.

⁶⁸ Wright, A. R. (1977). *First Medicine Man: The Tale of Yobaghu-Talyonunh*. Anchorage, Alaska, USA: O.W. Frost, Publisher.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh knew that he could not save his wife, so he prepared to get his revenge. With a burning log from the fire, he branded and beat all the women of the camp except the fox-woman.

Since then, all the animal people have hated and feared man.

Meanwhile, the Tail-man climbed the cache and was about to seize Yobaghu-Talyonunh's wife and claim her as his captive when the Fox grabbed him and threw him off. Then the fox took Yobaghu-Talyonunh's wife and brought her to her husband.

The Fox and Yobaghu-Talyonunh became even greater friends.

The next day the camp was moved. Now, in moving camp, the men always went ahead, the women coming behind and pulling the sleds.

It happened that Yobaghu-Talyonunh's wife was the last woman in the train.

The Tail-man hid beside the trail until all had passed, and then he made advances to Yobaghu-Talyonunh's wife. She refused to talk to him, whereupon he grew angry and slew her.

When the men reached the camping place, the Tail-man boasted that he had killed someone's wife.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh waited for some time, and when his wife did not appear he thought "He must speak true." He was very sorry.

One day when the men were having a shooting match with bows and arrows, Yobaghu-Talyonunh deliberately shot the Tail-man. As fast as they could, he and the Fox began to chop the Tail-man to pieces. When they came to the end of the tail, it bounced up and away.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh and the fox returned to the camp, the children of the Tail-man were singing, "Before dawn brightens the sky, our father will return."

Sure enough, in the morning the Tail-man walked into camp still singing his song that he had killed someone's wife.

Yobaghu-Talyonunh was very much surprised and mystified. But after much thought he decided that the secret lay in the tail of the Tail-man.

So at their next shooting match when he again shot the Tail-man, he and the Fox chopped him up as before. But when they came to the tail, Yobaghu-Talyonunh caught it and held the end tightly in his hand.

The tail spoke, "This is the end. I am helpless now."

Yobaghu-Talyonunh and the Fox piled trees over the Tail-man, taking pains to weight the end of the tail down firmly. Then they covered the heap mountain-high with snow.

When they went back to camp, the children of the Tail-man were singing as before, "Before the dawn brightens to sky, our father will return."

"No, this is the end of your father," said Yobaghu-Talyonunh.

All night, scratching's were heard and a voice said, "My children, I can help it no longer. I can never return."

To this day, many people quiet their children at night by making scratching noises on the floor or wall saying, "The spirit of the Tail-man is at work!"

The next morning all the Tail-children (who were weasel, the mink, the lynx and such) went to the heap of trees and ice that had formed into a mountain, and they built a fire to thaw it out.

But they could do nothing, for their father cried, "It's hot! It's hot!" when they tried to chop him out, he cried, "Aba! Aba!" which means "Ouch!"

There are some that think the Tail-children are still trying to thaw their father out, for to this day the mountain smokes at intervals, and often great rumblings are heard inside. There are said to be the rumblings of the Tail-man and his bad luck.

Beaver Man and the Wicked Mother-in-Law⁶⁹

As told by Jimmy Scotty James

And here is another one again.

Beaver man goes across one lady. And she has god a daughter again. That old lady tells Beaver Man to stay with her daughter. And he says, "All right."

And Beaver Man knows that she is a bad old lady. She has got arms from here [her forearms] that are like sharp knives.

And Beaver Man stays with them. And again the old lady wants to kill her son-in-law. But he is too smart, and that's why they never kill him.

And on the second night, that is the time that the old lady is going to kill him. When the man had gone outside, the old lady told her daughter, "Tell him that you hurt yourself on one side and [so] you [want to] sleep on this side."

That man doesn't want to sleep there, but he does sleep there. In the middle of the night when his wife is asleep, he moves on to the other side of his wife. So he moves the old lady's daughter [to the side of the old lady].

Quite a while after that, the old lady wakes up. That is the time that she is going to kill her son-in-law, but her daughter is just sound asleep. Then the old lady gets up.

Beaver Man watches. He just watches. All that time he doesn't sleep.

⁶⁹ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

The mother-in-law just moves her arms up and down this way, and cuts up with them. First she sharpens them with her teeth. Finally she starts, and she just cuts and cuts. She thinks she is cutting her son-in-law, but it is her daughter.

“Mama”, she says. “You’re doing it to me?”

That [Beaver] man runs away. He runs away for good.

Tachokaii Stories: Man that paddled the wrong way⁷⁰

As told by Mary Vittrekwa

This man had two wives, first time he knew women. Both of these women he can’t see, as they are invisible. One is called Dawn woman and the other is called Night woman. Both of these women had babies from this man. The Dawn woman had a ptarmigan baby. Night woman gave birth to a Blood sucker. When Dawn woman breast fed her baby, she let him eat fast, but when Night woman fed her baby, she took her time. The man was curious about this. He can’t see his wives, but can see what they are working with. That’s the time they were working with skins outside and while they were doing that, he went into their tent to see his kids.

The first one was a ptarmigan who looks very good and is happy but when he went to see the second child, blood sucker, he just about got bit by him. Just as the bloodsucker opened his mouth to bite him, he shoved an arrow into his mouth and killed him. That Night woman returned and when she saw what he did, she started yelling, “My Child! My Child!” The killing of their child was not at all pleasing to Night woman, so she decided not to do any more work after that. She just refused.

The man always go out hunting and would bring back rabbits. One bunch he would put in front of Dawn woman and the other in front of Night woman. Dawn woman always cleans up the rabbits right away, but Night Woman refused to clean these rabbits. For days she didn’t touch the rabbits, so that man questioned her. “How come you’re not working?”

She told him, you want to have to have that other child, so don’t think I’m going to work for you again!”

The man got mad so he went and grabbed the rabbits and one by one he put red ochre under each of their feet and let them go. He brought them all back to life. This made the man very angry so he got himself ready and left his wives behind and went out on his own.

The Night Woman told the Dawn woman, “He loves you more that me, so why don’t you go with him?” After one day she did go. The man was expecting Dawn woman. He always built a big fire across the lake. Whenever he sees her coming, he takes off to some other place. Dawn woman decided to play a trick on him so the next time he decides to make camp, she saw where he made his fire, so she went around him, so he can’t see her foot steps. Just when she got close to him, he jumped up and put on his

⁷⁰ Vittrekwa, M. (n.d.). *Tachokaii Stories*. Dawson City, Yukon, Canada: Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Heritage Library Resource.

snowshoes and started to take off. It was at this time that Dawn woman threw their kid at him. She said to him, "I thought you love this child! What are you doing this for? From that point on, they started to travel together. They were following a trail, when they came upon a stage (cache) that had some meat in it. They made a fire and started to cook this meat, but found out that it was rotten.

At that time, humans live a funny life. They were very different, they didn't have any mouths like humans have today. It was a mouth with some kind scale covering it. The only way the people of that time were able to eat was by smelling their food. Strange way to live in those times. So they continued on their way until they came to a place where lots of people were camped. Before he went to the people, he made a big cache(stage) for his wife. He put her in this stage so that no one could see her and then he went amongst the people.

The people asked this man if he had a wife. He was kind of scared of them, so he said yes. They all rushed passed him to get to her. They brought her back and when she started eating with her mouth, they were curious and watched her when she ate. All of a sudden she cut the scale off of one their mouths to open it up. She put meat into the mouth and showed this person how to chew. Soon everyone had the scale cut of from their mouths. At that time there was some sort of being; half human, half animal. The people called him "Wolf man"

These people who just had their mouths opened told the man and his wife about this wolf man. They told him that he always kills off all the women. Whenever they catch, him, they kill him, pound him up and burn him, but they always leave the tail untouched.

Dawn woman said "I'm going to move faster that Wolf man!" So as she was their guest, the people let her go first. Wolf man was waiting for them by the trail, not only on one side but on both sides of the trail, This Wolf man is a medicine man so he has the power to make himself become two! The first time they move nothing happened, but the second time the people started to move again, that's when Wolf man killed Dawn woman. Her husband was very sad because of that. While everyone started out again, he stayed behind with his child. That Wolf man came around to his tent and asked him, "How come you're not going with the rest?" That man told him. "Nothing wrong with me. I am going to go catch up to them later on"

Wolf man told him, "Maybe you miss your woman". The man didn't say anything. He was very angry at what Wolf man said and this made him strong. He got up and put his child on his back and went out to catch up to the rest of the people. Here, as he was getting close to them, Wolf man was already there, ahead of the people. He came close enough to that man that he could club him. He clubbed that Wolf man and killed him. He stayed behind with his child to try and get rid of Wolf man for good this time.

He made a big fire. Then he pounded up that body of Wolf man, flesh and all. Only the tail was left. He left it there to see what would happen to it. All of a sudden the tail made a move so he took it and put it down on a rock so he could pound it up too. All of a sudden a voice came out of that tail saying "Are you going to get rid of the tail too?" Hearing that, he pounded it up good and threw it into the fire. This was the end of Wolf man. No more man-eating, killer, Wolf-Man.

[This story is about good and evil and how you always have to be watchful. You think things are buried in the past but they always pop up. You have to ready to squash evil when it pops up. Also, the Dene people can always triumph over evil. (Sally talking to Louise Profeit-Lablanc)]

The bear at Cache Creek.

Percy Henry tells a story about Tachokaii and how a bear was bothering the people at Cache Creek. The bear was all around the caches and the people couldn't get near to get their food and things. Tachokaii came and got rid of the bear. Then he travelled down the river, putting other situations right, and then he disappeared where the sea met the sky.

MORE STORIES

A Ghost Story⁷¹

As told by Jimmy Scott James



There is one boy. I guess he's as big as Oscar—no—big as Jimmy [about twelve years old] I guess—when the ghost gets him.

On that evening—that kid is crying, crying. They try to stop him, and that old fellow, his daddy hollered at the owl to come in.

And the ghost hears it—and that ghost is coming into the camp. He [the ghost] says, "Give me my grandchild." And that kid's scared of it. And his father grabs him. By gosh, that spirit just grabs him. He got the kid and runs away with him.

When he got that kid over there [to the 'other' side], that boy says he's hungry. And that spirit looked in the bag on his back and he got some grub out of there. He got grease and dried meat pounded together—it looks like that to him, that kid. And he [the kid] ate it. He keeps doing that, I don't know how long he stays with him.

Then that ghost asks him, he say, "What is that?" he says. He see a big bunch of people there. "What's that growing out here?" he say. [Scotty indicates ears.]

And that boy says, "That's the horns they making there."

That ghost asks the kid, "Can you put your horns on?"

That kid says, "Yes, I can do it. All right." And then he tells [the ghost] that everyone makes sharp sticks—just little ones to go in the [ear] holes. That kid is doing it.

⁷¹ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

Then that ghost tells them [the other spirit/ghosts]. “Put the wood this way” [demonstrating what the bow showed him]. Then he makes the ghosts sleep. He laid out a log and make every ghost put its head on the log. And that ghost tell him he’s the first one who is going to do it.

“Watch now,” he tell them: “Don’t move.”

And he [the boy] got two sharp sticks. And he got a rock in his hand. The first one he gets it. He holds that sharp stick against the ear—where there’s a little hole. That kid hits the sharp stick in that spirit’s ear. And that spirit, he just stretches himself out. That’s all. And that kid keeps doing it until the last [ghost?] is killed. He killed them all. That kid watches them for a while. After a while, nothing moves, and that kid run back to home. That kid just gets scared of it. He think they’re going to follow him, just like flying.

And that kid come and jumps right in his mother’s house. His mother is just as happy as she can be. And the mother ask him, “How you get away from there?”

“And that kid come and jumps right in his mother’s house. His mother is just as happy as she can be. And the mother ask him, “How you get away from there?”

“And that’s the way I did it! I drive sharp sticks into their ears.”

And as soon as he finished the story about them—about what he did—as soon as that fire heat touched his body, he saw ants coming out of his nose and from his eyes, that kid. They just kept coming out. Those ants ate him, that kid. That’s the dried meat and the grease the ghost feeds him—that was the ants.

That woman was happy—she thought her son came back. As soon as he finished this story—she’s happy like that. But then he falls back. That’s all. He’s dead, that kid, just nothing but skin left. All the ants ran out. The ants ate him up.

That’s all.

I don’t know where they were. I heard this story two times. My grandma told me.

Boy who Stayed with Fish⁷²

As told by Mrs. Kitty Smith

Two years, one boy get drowned, stay with fish. But he don’t marry fish, nothing. He just stay.

He’s just a little kid. Want to snare seagull. Same size as my little grandchild.

His mother give him fish one winter. “What for you give me this fish? It’s mouldy, right here.” That boy throw away that fish. Something wrong.

⁷² Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

Next summer, when fish coming, that's the time he set snare for seagull. Got it! "You got seagull! Quick, quick, it's deep place, it's going to go." Just as he's going to grab him, that boy fall in. That seagull too, he told him.

He fall in. He drown? They don't know. Goes down. He can't do nothing, don't know where his home is now. That seagull there is just like his partner. He hold him. Go down, down that river. Klukshu River.

He's with those fish now, they go down, past another city. Talk about how they break that war house. That's his people's fish trap. "We broke them already. We fight already." That's what they say. Other people coming, other fish. All going same place. That's dogfish, I guess, last fish - tluk fish they call them, coast Indian. They go back now.

Go by city. Lots of people, lots of kids. They got nothing to eat. They got nothing.

That seagull, though, he eat lots of fish eggs. That boy want eat too. Seagull stomach full. That boy take some, but he's ashamed. He hide them someplace. But someone see him. "Ahhhh, that boy, he eat dirty thing." That's the time he throw them away, that dry fish. They tell him that's bad and he throw them away. He get shame.

One of them come to him, "You starve?"

He tell them, "Since I go away, eat nothing, just drink water."

"Come, I'll show you." He took him. "See that little kid? You push him. Then take him and cook him. But be careful how you stick him, or he'll cry, that kid."

All right." That little boy, he push him. Gee, little King Salmon fall in! He hide him. Seagull with him. He make fire, eat him. He's full now! Then he come back. That little kid he play yet! "See those people over there?" that kid tell him, "they dry fish. (When people do it right) those fish come back. They don't kill them."

One man there look like a chief. That boy lonesome sometimes. That man tries to take him to that lake. Sit down with him, put his hand on his neck that way.

Come on, go with us." That seagull with him too, all time. That big man sit with him beside Fish Lake, hold his hand on that boy's neck. Finally, he forgot it (home). Worry no more. He eat now, all time. Forgot it. He stay there.

One year, he stay there.

Those boys tell him, "We re going to go with the people. You come with us."

"Yes, I want to go."

"We're going to teach you."

They wait for right time. "Some people going now, some people going now. We go now," they said. They got grub. They feed him to. He eat.

They go..go..go..go..camp some place..go..go. Lots of people meet them, you know.

Already they cut'em, make them dry, when they come down.

"Don't know what is that they make," he think about it. He sit on the boat. He no work, just the four boys work. Got their own boat. That seagull with him - his partner all time.

One place, water go this way. They're fishing here too, you know, old people.

"Oh, we're going to throw some hook, we're going to heave it.

Have you got hook?" (People say)

"Don't sit this way. If you do they're going to catch you, tail side. They're not going to get you. They're not going to kill you." That's what they tell him.

"Yes," he said, "that's what I'll do."

He go himself, I guess. Along there. Right there...sees hook...yes...it goes across him.

Pretty soon, fish trap. Pretty soon, that house. They don't say "fish trap" say "war house."

"Just in the morning, we're going to try it," they said. (Try to get past it.)

In the morning, just sun come out. Up high. "We're going to see now, going to see that house!" My goodness, right there he see his mamma sitting down. She cutting fish. His mamma. He know that someone sitting down at creek, at that fish water there. They cut fish, sit down there. He don't get worried. He just stay there. Them boys, they're gone. They're gone that house of war.

He stay there. That lady holler for her husband, you know. "Hah. King Salmon here. Try to get it!" she tell her husband. He come down, his daddy. He hook him. He club him. He's on the ground now.

He got some kind of wire. Copper wire, he got it, you know. That boy. It used to be all the time on his neck.

"Quick, cut him," he tell his wife. "What's the matter?" He look around. That's the one his son got it used to be. He run home, that man, his daddy. Skin. Moose skin. Tanned one. They put that fish inside that moose blanket. They take him home. Go to his uncle place. He run there his daddy.

"My brother-in-law! That your boy (who) get drowned one. He got a copper wire, that fish in there. We got him home."

"Bring him here," he said.

His daddy bring him there. They put him some place up high and leave him there. They call all his people, that man, young people. "We'll try not going to eat. We're not going to eat, we're not going to drink water. Four days like that. We try to save that boy. Might be come back again." That's what he say that man.

"All right."

Everybody now in there. Man, some woman. Don't eat. His mother too don't eat. No. He know, him, that he's in that blanket: He don't know he's fish. Three days they don't eat those people. Sometimes they put stick that way, just like Indian doctor.

Four days, they hear noise in the morning. "Ah..." he say that. Everybody wake up. That man his uncle (say) "Get up, get up, I hear something." People get up. Everybody. Sing. "Oh...Ah..."

"Take me down." he say.

Gee, big boy inside. He's big doctor, that boy.

They're gone back, those fish. The dry fish they cut up all go back home. They got boat, I guess. I don't know. Which way, I don't know.

But he come back person. He's doctor. He know everything. He don't eat fish, though.

Chunatla they call him. Mouldy head.

The Boy in the Moon⁷³

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

See the mark in the middle of the moon like a man? That was a little Indian boy when nobody had anything to eat. During the famine this boy dreamed that they were going to kill lots of caribou. The boy said that when they killed all the caribou, he wanted the leader caribou.

The boy's uncle gave him the wrong caribou, because the uncle did not believe the boy dreamed it. Then the boy cried for two nights because he didn't get the right kind of caribou. The boy told his father, who brought home the hind quarter of the caribou, to never cut the flesh off it to the bone, but to cut off what he needed, wrap it up in a skin and put it under his head to sleep on. The father did this and when he awoke he found a whole hind quarter, and thus forever he could eat caribou from this leg and always have it whole.

Next night the boy, who always slept between his father and mother, was gone and nobody could find him. The boy wore marten skin pants. In the morning the left leg of the pants was found on the tent pole where the hole is in the roof for the fire. Hence they concluded that he went up through the hole and left pant's leg was torn off going through. He went up to the moon and was seen there for the next night, and it was proved, for he had a larger right leg than left, because the right leg has pants on.

From his right hand hangs a little round bag with the wrong caribou meat in it. That night a big storm came and snowed all over where the caribou was cached. Then all the killed caribou came to life and went away, and the Indians couldn't find their meat.

⁷³ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Then they all starved to death except the boy's father and mother. During the fall and winter with clear sky, one who has been properly instructed can readily make out the outline of this boy in the moon.

The Girl and the Grizzly⁷⁴

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

This is another story of girl who married bear.

This girl and her sisters went to pick berries. She takes the lead. Her berry string broke. Those berries spilled.

"Help me pick them up."

"Pick them up yourself," they say. They go ahead. One by one they pass her. None help her.

As she work, nice young man came to her.

"There's nice big bunch up here. Let's pick that one." She's single, so she went with him. They went little higher. Bog tree, log, fallen over there. They went under it.

"Let's camp here." he said. Before they go to bed he hit her on the head. That's to fix her mind, so she'll never think of home. He's really grizzly bear. He look like person to her though.

He tell her, "If you wake up in morning, don't look at me."

They camp. Next day. Pick berries all day long. That evening they walk under log again. That's really a year every time they walk under log. When they camp, that's winter camp in den. Seems just like a day to her.

When they camp he say to her, "You stay here. I gopher hunt." That's the second night. He tell her, "If you wake up before me, don't look at me."

Next day, same again. She never see what he do with berries. But she know she's not saving.

"Save for winter," she say.

"Just eat them. Don't worry about winter," he tell her.

Third day is the same.

They walk under log, camp. He hunts gophers. Brings back lots of gophers. They eat.

⁷⁴ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

“Why don’t you save for winter?”

“Don’t worry, winter will take care of itself,” he say. Fourth day is the same. They go under tree, camp. It’s four years now since she left.

Next he says, “This place down here, my mother and father put up fish. Let’s see what those people do. I’ll go down, see if people are there. He leaves her there. He walks down to notify them. It’s grizzly camp.

“I’ve got wife coming,” he tells them.

They all turn to human for her; really they’re grizzly. People 64 there, they feed her, that mother and father.

They all tell her not to look at them if she wake up first in morning. Two, three times they help her. One morning she wake up, open her eyes. She sees big grizzly hand on her. She’s scared. She looks around, sees all bears, all grizzly.

He woke up. “Why did you look at me? Didn’t I tell you?” He turn into human for her. “Now you know. But her mind is still fixed from that slap.

Every day they fish there.

One day he say, “See that smoke over there? Don’t go into that camp.”

She gets curious. She sneak over. She sees human being sit down and here it was her aunt on her father’s side. She was lost a long time ago. No wonder grizzly didn’t want her to see her because she’s human.

She look up. “My niece, my niece. You here too? Long ago it happen to me too. Grizzly save me. Don’t stay here. You go back home. I can’t. I have two kids. I can’t leave them. You have no kids. You might as well go home, in morning bring little balsam tree top. Bring jack pine tree top and spruce tree top. Bring buttercup tops too. Bring whetstone. Bring me little grease. And bring me bladder of Tlo fish - that little fish with big head, little thin body. Fill that bladder full of water. You bring all that next time you come.

It takes time to get those things. Next time she sneak over she give all that. That’s third day since she see her aunt.

“Okay, I’m going to fix them. Tomorrow you’re going to try. When you hear someone coming, take off. If they catch you, they’ll kill you. You got to get home. When they come put this buttercup stem comb through your hair. Then throw back. Buttercup stems will grow up so thick behind you, you can’t get through.

Next take jack pine tree top comb. Put through hair, throw behind you. Then spruce tree top, the same. Then balsam tree top. It will make thick trees, slow them up. They can’t travel. Then put grease on your mouth. You won’t be hungry.” her aunt tell her. “Then throw stomach of water and with it throw whetstone. That will make lake with bluff across it. Then you’ll come to lake. Man will be there. He’ll save you.”

That girl took off. Halfway up mountain she hear people. They're close. She did all those things. Buttercup stem comb, then jack pine tree top, then spruce top, then balsam. Then she put grease on mouth. After she threw bladder and whetstone she made big lake with bluff across. She run, run. She came out on lake. Saw that man in middle.

"Help me, help me," she holler, "save me."

That man come to shore.

"Grizzly chase me," she tells him. "Save me and I'll marry you."

"I've got wife," he told her.

"I'll be your slave then."

He took her, just a little way out

"Go farther, farther."

"Nope," he doesn't.

Three grizzly bears came running, up. The rest gave up, I guess. One was her husband.

That man hit boat with stick. Boat took off. Those bears swim in. When they're close he hit with stick again. That boat took off.

Finally he gets tired of that. Finally he spit on his spear, then threw it in water. He hit all three bears. One by one they float up, dead. He took that spear, wash off. Put it in boat.

"You hungry?" he ask. In bow of boat is Tlingit style cedar box. "Good meat in there. Eat." She eat dry meat, grease. She never eat for so many days.

He's fishing for frog, that's for his wife. Then he went home. Just before he gets home, he tells her, "I've got wife already. When she's eating, don't look at her. She kill lots of women. I'll take a chance with you. Don't look when she eat. Don't get up out of bed if I'm out."

He tell his wife he save that girl. He made her camp across the fire.

Next morning he hunt. "Don't look at her," he say.

Quite a while she stayed with them. He sleeps with her instead of his wife.

Finally one time she wonders, "Why not look at his wife?" He's out. She look through that gopher robe and watch that woman eat frogs.

"Ach!" That woman feels it. The frog get stuck. Right then both those girl's eyes come out. That wife's power does that. It dug both that girl's eyes out.

He comes back, sees those eyes of blood. He pretend not to notice.

His wife says, "You brought back nice wife. All she does is sleep." He knows that young girl is killed.

He brought back what he killed, frogs, for her. That's her food. He pretend to fix his spear.

"Hey, what if you hit me," that wife say.

Right then, he kill that frog lady. He burnt her up so she's never come back.

He looked for that young girl's eyes. He has power too. He put back those eyes so she get up again.

He brings good meat to her, seal.

"Let's move camp, I don't want to stay where I kill frog woman. I'm human. That frog turn into woman and I had to marry her. I don't feel right for long time now. If we move camp, I'll lose that funny feeling.

She's gone four and a half years by then. Four years with grizzly and half year with this man. She think about her home.

That man asks her, "Are you lonesome?"

"Kind of," she says.

"Well, I'll take you home."

Then go in his boat. That boat can go anywhere. The land where her father and mother are.

"Go up and see you father and mother, and if you want, you can come back, I'll wait, but if you don't come back, I'll leave."

She goes to them. She tells them, "I want you people to welcome him." So they did, and they live happily ever after.

Those people accept them. Five years later, she's back.



The Woodpecker⁷⁵

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

The woodpecker was a very domestic sort of a man bird. He used to get married lots of times. When he would get married he would go away from the people with his wife. After a while he would come back without his wife. He would say that she died. Then he would get another wife.

One girl was very smart, so she married him to find out what he did with his wives. They went away together. When he found a good hunting ground he stayed there. Whatever game he got, he only gave fat and grease to his wife and ate the meat himself. Whenever she wanted a drink of water he gave her grease to drink.

⁷⁵ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Every time he went hunting he took about ten days, and brought back fat and grease and blueberries and cranberries and all kinds of berries, but no meat. The girl knew by this that he was going to make her fat that she couldn't walk, for already when she would lie down she could hardly get up. Then, before he went hunting again, at her request, he prepared a dugout on the bank of the creek.

She told him she was lonesome and wanted to be where she could see the creek running. This dugout was to be her home while he was away. The door was covered with brush. She told him to make a small sharp spear for her, so she could keep the mice away with it. As soon as her husband went she took the spear and dug a tunnel from the dugout to the creek for her escape, for she knew he would kill her when she became very fat.

She was too fat to walk, and so she rolled down to the creek through the tunnel, and stayed in it a while day, until the fat came off from her. Then she went back into the woods and watched till her husband came back. As he approached she saw that he was picking a lot of berries.

When he reached the dugout, where the hole was covered with brush for concealment, he ran his spear through the brush so as to kill her; but she was there. Every time he jabbed the spear in and withdrew it he tasted the point to see if it stuck her. Then he said aloud to himself, "Some spirit must have taken her away."

The woman now was sure that he wanted to kill her, so she ran away back to her family. She told them all about it, saying that he killed his wives and ate them, and that he fed them berries to flavour their meat. The man came back then. His wife's mother previously put her in a sack and hid her. He cried much, pretending to be sorry for the death of his wife. He said to the mother, "My wife has died again." Everybody else cried, to deceive him into thinking they believed him.

Next day everybody moved again. The old woman gave him a heavy sack to pack along and told him it belonged to his brother-in-law, who needed it. She told him to hang it high on a tree, so the dogs couldn't get it. She told the other men not to help him lift it up.

He tried as hard to lift it up that he broke his back bone. When the man was injured nobody took care of him. The hunting party went away without him. When they returned and saw that he was sure to die, they let him see his wife, so that he could know that he was found out.

His wife was in the sack. Her mother arrived with other Indian women, untied the sack, and let her out, and she was safe. He died then. They preferred to let him kill himself in this way.

The Robin⁷⁶

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

The Robin had a husband but she loved another man. She had a family of four – a husband, son, daughter and self. When she sat on a tree she would laugh. Because she loved another man, she wanted her husband and son to die, so that she and her daughter could live with this man.

Every time she sang she would say, “I wish my husband and son would die,” then she would laugh. Then she would say, “I wish I and my daughter would live,” then she would laugh. Her husband did whatever she said, and he died. The boy died too. Her husband and son died because she wished them to die. She wished this so she could get the man she wanted.

The native still chants the words in his own language, meaning, “I wish my husband and son would die,” to the tune of a robin whistling. The laugh referred to is the clattering noise which a robin makes when excited.

The Brothers-in-Law⁷⁷

As told by George Blondin

Once upon a time, two whiskey jacks and two woodpeckers lived together. The woodpecker’s sister was married to the whiskey jack and the whiskey jack’s sister was married to the woodpecker. The whiskey jack’s lifestyle was pretty good. He was never hungry, for he was a thief. He stole from hunters and wolves and cached good all summer long in the woods—in rotten logs or trees. Whiskey jacks live well during the winter, and they don’t have to kill anything.

The woodpecker’s life was poor in comparison. His main food was worms, which are good enough for a woodpecker. But for his whiskey jack wife, this diet left much to be desired. The whiskey jack acted as leader of their small group. The two males called each other *sela*, which means “brother-in-law”.

One winter day the whiskey jack said, “Sela, lets go on the land and travel. It would do us good to see more new country.” So the two couples set out. After each day they stayed together in one hut. The whiskey jack, as usual stole from hunters and wolves, and brought back meat and fish. The woodpecker plied his trade, pecking on wood for worms.

⁷⁶ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

⁷⁷ Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

After a few days the whiskey jack made a suggestion. "Let's split up and travel separately from here on. Later, we will meet again." It was agreed. One couple traveled together along a big ridge, and the other on a second ridge. When they made campfires they could see each other's smoke.

The woodpecker's wife was always hungry, no matter how many worms she ate. She and her husband were making a fire on top of a hill one evening when they saw smoke on the far ridge. "Oh boy, that's my brother's smoke," said the woodpecker's wife. "They must be eating all sorts of fat meat. I wish we were with them." The next day she said she did not feel well, and as time went on she complained more and more.

Her complaining began to bother the woodpecker, and the couple quarrelled. "What's the matter with you?" the woodpecker shouted. "I bring you worms every day. I work hard. I peck wood until my beak is sore and you can eat as much as you like. You don't appreciate what I'm doing.

"You call those worms food?" his wife screeched. "They're garbage! When I stay with my brother I eat fat meat and fish. Now that I stay only with you, I eat worms every day. I'm losing strength. I'm getting skinny! Lets look for my brother, and you can have your worms for the rest of your life."

The next day they found the whiskey jack's camp. "I'm eating worms every day! I'm weak from starvation!" the woodpecker's wife told her brother. "Take me back with you. Let this woodpecker go somewhere else!"

The whiskey jack told the woodpecker to get lost, and that's the story of two brothers-in-law who tried to live together.

The Miraculous Little Man⁷⁸

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

Long time age, before the "Old Man" and "Old Woman," lots of Indians were together and they fought until all were killed except an old woman and her daughter. This old woman cried every day because there was no man to help her do her work or get her wood. Every day when she had to get her wood from the bush she cried, and each day she had to go a little farther for the wood.

One day she heard a sound like a baby crying in the woods. At first she did not go to see what it was, but told her daughter, for she knew there were no people there. Her daughter said, "Next time you hear it; go to it, and if you find a baby bring it;" She went for wood again and heard it, and going to it she found a baby boy at the foot of a spruce tree.

The boy was not born, but found by the old woman in the brush. When she brought it, mother and daughter rejoiced, for bye and bye they would have a man. As soon as they got him home he

⁷⁸ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

became strong and could work. As a joke the old woman told him to take their dog and go out hunting, thinking that he didn't know how.

She told him to tie a rope around the dog's neck. He tied it on the dog, then went out hunting, and on the way he pulled so hard that he choked the dog and dragged it back with him. The old woman still had friends in another place. So she and her daughter and the little man went amongst these Indians again.

The boy was small and didn't grow. When he went hunting he would put on an eagle skin like a coat and fly. He was a pretty good hunter. People asked him, "How do you cut the moose with a knife? You are too small."

He said that when he kills a moose he is like a big man, but is small when he comes home again. He does all the miracle work. He does not bring his eagle skin home again, but leaves it two miles away on a tree. The daughter found the eagle skin and took one tail feather to stick in her hair.

The boy found it out and was angry, so he said to his sister, "I wish all your friends would be killed again." Then she said "What are you going to do with your mother?" (The old woman), and he said, "I will put her in the corner of a birch bark basket."

In a little while war came and all were killed except the old woman and the daughter and the little man. Then the little man made lots of very small arrows and made a few from a bears ribs. He worked all the winter making these arrows, because he was going to fight the people all by himself.

These people who killed his friends lived by a big lake. The old woman was with the little man, but the daughter had been captured by these people. He got lots of bags for arrows, and, being small, he walked under the snow and hid a bag of arrows about every 50 yards apart, so that when he shot away his arrows in fighting them he could run back to get some more.

When he came near, the people thought that he was a raven because he was such a small black thing. His sister said, "You people didn't kill the little man with the old woman." There was one man who wasn't in the fight, so he was selected to kill the little man.

The man took a small stick to kill the little man, thinking it would be easy, but the little man threw a small object at him, striking him in the chest and killing him. Then all the people, thousands in number, ran after him without their arrows because he was too small to shoot.

He ran back the same trail on which he came. He would come out of his hole and shoot some; they would rush after him, and back he would go and come up else where and shoot again, every time he shot he killed. He killed all those people in a day. He brought his sister back to the old woman at home.

After the fight he said he would make a big pot-latch (a celebration with feasting and giving of presents), because he had wounded and killed lots of people. Then he went hunting every day, and killed all kinds of game and saved the hide and meat.

The mother and daughter tanned all the skins, dried the game and cached it. The little man said he was going to give all the skins as presents to other people. The old woman said "All the people are killed, so who can you give them to?" and he said "Bye and bye lots of people will come."

This was on a big island just this side of the Old Woman rock. When he collected his meat and fur he began to sing every day that he wished that lots of people would come from up and down the river to the pot-latch on the island, and they came without being told.

They all moved about together and sang as usual at a pot-latch. When they did it the island cracked in tow parts, because too many people were on it. The people feasted every day. After the feasting he gave away all kinds of skins and furs. He made the big time because he killed lots of people and was sorry for it. He killed the people because they killed his friends first.

Star Husband⁷⁹

As told by Mrs. Angela Sidney

A father and mother had two daughters. They travel around in the bush, drying meat, camping out here and there. These two girls talk and lot and play at night -- don't go to sleep quick.

One night one said, "Gee, I wish I'd marry that red star."

The other one said, "Gee, I wish I'd marry the blue one."

They talk away like this.

Next morning, first thing they found them selves in another country. Both of them got husbands. They're sleeping with men. One of them when he walked looked kind of blue; the other looked red. "You wish for us," they said. So they found out they're stars.

Their husbands are good hunters. They go out every day-- bring in moose, bring in meat. Those girls stay up there, must be quite a while, tanning moose skins, making babiche. From the skins they tan, they make big thick winter mitts and leggings. That's what people used to wear. They make quite a few of them.

Finally, though, they get lonesome for their mother and father. They make up their mind to run away. The only way they could run away though is to dig through that sky. That's what they plan.

Their husbands say, "What do you do with all those skins?"

"Oh, we boil them and eat them," they tell them.

They make babiche string, I don't know how many tons of it. They get together their thick leggings and mitts.

⁷⁹ Cruikshank, J. (1977). *My Stories are my Wealth*. (A. Sidney, K. Smith, & R. Dawson, Storytellers) Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada: Willow Printers.

Finally they find a big rock, then start to dig. They dig, dig, every day as soon as their husbands go. Finally they dig through. Then they tie that babiche around the rock and they let it down.

Go down, go down, go down. Finally they could tell that it landed someplace. After they were sure it landed safely the youngest went down first. "When I get down I'll pull the string." They tied the other end to a tree. She take quite a while going down. Finally that oldest one feel the string move. So she went down next.

Here it was on top of a big flat tree.

They stay there, don't know how they're going to get down. Here, they're over an animal trail. Every day when animals go by they say, "Pack us down, grandpa."

"No," he says. "I don't climb trees."

Another one go by, moose, caribou, they all say they can't climb trees. Finally, at last wolverine was coming along. First thing they did was they whistle at him.

"Oh, oh, what's that?" he says.

They keep whistling at him. Finally he sees the girls up there.

"Grandpa, pack us down and we're going to marry you," they tell him.

"Okay," just that quick he got up there, bring them down, both of them. Right there they camp.

Next day he goes hunting. Oh, they stay there quite awhile, I guess, but then they said they're going to run away from him next. So when he went out hunting in the morning, they took off. It was right close to where their father and mother was staying.

Must be they stay in the same place yet, I guess, kind of hoping those girls might come back. They don't know what happened to them and they're staying there because they thought they might come back.

Before they left, they kicked their garters off, four garters - each had two. They made snare of them, put in four places. They told; those four strings, "Whistle at him when he comes back." They figure he's going to keep running back and forth there among the garters. That's to slow him down, I suppose.

In the meantime, here they got to their mother and father.

An Owl Foretells an Epidemic⁸⁰

As told by Jimmy Scotty James



The owl is a thermometer. When he talks in the morning, that fellow means that it is going to be warm. If you talk to owls they stop. Just listen to what they say.

A long time ago when owls talked down on the Taku River, a fellow was out on the river looking for grizzly bears. He had a muzzle loader. Every night he went out to get grizzly bears. He sat by the river and watched the bear trails, and when the bears came out he shot them.

That man was sitting there a little while, and the owl came. That owl sat on top of the tree, and the owl was hooting first. After that the owl said to that man, "You know you people are going to stay under the ground!"

And that man beat it home quickly. He got scared. He just got scared. And when he got home he told the people. "The owl tells me bad news, that fellow! He says you people are going to be under the ground!"

After that, some kind of disease came. All those Indians were dying so fast that they just put them under the ground. And after that there were no more people.

How the Bear Stole the Fox's Leg⁸¹

As told by George Blondin

One day long ago, the bear and the fox had an argument. The bear got very angry and tore the fox's front leg off. Then he fled with it across a big lake. In the village there was sorrow over this. The Dene tried to help the fox but they couldn't, since its foreleg was missing.

One day the people heard somebody singing, from across the clear lake. As the canoe came nearer, they saw it was Raven, singing because he had just had his meal. The elders invited Raven to the village. They asked him to help them do something about the fox's missing leg, and Raven agreed.

Next day, Raven paddled his canoe across the lake to the place where the bear had disappeared with the fox's foreleg. It was evening when Raven came ashore and saw the bear's tent. The bear greeted Raven with an open heart.

⁸⁰ McClellan, C. (2007). *My Old People's Stories: A Legacy for Yukon First Nations*. Yukon, Canada: Yukon Cultural Services Branch.

⁸¹ Blondin, G. (1922). *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop, The Northern Publishers.

As he went into the tent, Raven saw that the bear had the missing fox leg tied to a post behind his pillow. The bear's daughter cooked a good meal for Raven afterward, the bear begged Raven to tell him a story. "Wise Raven, you are a good storyteller. I want to hear you out," said the bear.

So Raven started telling a story that went on and on. He told the story for so long that the bear kept dozing off. Early the next morning, as the spring sun warmed the tent, Raven was still telling his story. The bear got so drowsy he fell completely asleep. As the bear snored, Raven crept quietly to his pillow and untied the fox leg.

As raven ran out of the tent, the bear's daughter woke up. She woke the bear and tried to tell him Raven had stolen the fox's leg, but in her excitement she stuttered. She lost a good deal of time, so Raven was able to jump into his canoe and paddle off. When the bear got to the lakeshore, it was too late. All he could do was throw useless stones at Raven as he paddled away.

After he had paddled for some time, Raven drew near the village. He started to sing, then called out, "Put the fox on the shore with the part of his body where the leg is missing toward me. Then leave the fox alone."

The people did as Raven asked. Raven kept singing as he paddled closer. When he was beside the fox, Raven threw the leg so that it fell at the right place on the fox's body. It landed just a bit crookedly, though, and when the fox got up and ran away he limped a little. And that is why the fox doesn't really walk straight today.

Raven went back to where he had come from, singing all the way.

Porcupine and Beaver Story⁸²

As told by John Dayton

There was a small-size town and Porcupine was living there, but he wanted to go out of town. In those days Porcupine did not know how to swim, so he could not get across (the river), and everyone refused to take him. He went down to the beach and was standing on the edge of the water. He started to cry.

He said to himself, "I wish somebody would come along with a canoe to take me over."

Pretty soon he saw a Muskrat coming along. Muskrats were bigger in those days. And the Muskrat asked, "What are you crying about?"

Porcupine told him, "I wanted to cross over to where there are all kinds of willows and spruce trees for me to eat." He was getting hungry while staying in town.

Muskrat said, "All right. Get ready and I'll take you over."

⁸² Leguna, F. d. (1935). *Tales From the Dena: Indian Stories from the Tanana, Koy'kukuk, & Yukon Rivers*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.

And Porcupine asked him, "How are you going to take me over?"

The Muskrat said, "Just get on my tail."

Porcupine didn't believe that he could ride on the tail, and he didn't want to take the chance. He said his tail was too narrow. Muskrat got angry because he said he had a little narrow tail, so he told the Porcupine to go to China [!], and left him there.

So Porcupine began to cry again and wished for somebody to come along. After a little while there was Mink coming.

He asked, "What are you crying about?"

So Porcupine told him the same thing he told Muskrat. The Mink said he would take him over.

And Porcupine asked him, "How are you going to take me over?"

The Mink told him to ride on his tail.

Porcupine said, "Your tail is too short and bushy. There's no place for me to cook while we travel."

"Well then, you stay right here where you are!" and Mink started off.

Porcupine started to cry again, and he wished for another one to come along. After a while Beaver came.

Beaver said, "What do you cry about?"

And Porcupine told him the same thing as before.

Beaver told him to get ready. Porcupine said he was awfully glad to get ready, and he got on the Beaver's tail. He said, "Your tail is wide enough to carry six people," and he asked him if he could take enough load with him.

They started out, and Porcupine asked if he could start to cook. He told him he had taken a little wood along.

And beaver said, "Get your things ready that you have to cook. Get them ready before you start a fire."

When they started across, Porcupine asked Beaver if he could cut out little chunks from his tail.

Beaver told him, "Well, not too much," so he took out little chunks from different places in their tails.

Beaver told him that he couldn't stand the fire on his tail longer than to get to the middle of the river, and they were nearly there already.

Porcupine said, "I'll have the meal done pretty soon, before we get to the middle of the river." And then he thought to himself, "I wonder why he can't stand it. I'm going to keep my fire a little longer and see what Beaver does."

When they passed the middle of the river, Beaver said, "Ouch! My tail is burning!" and he shook his tail, and Porcupine drowned. Beavers have no hair on their tails now because of Porcupine's fire.

Porcupine started to walk toward the shore right on the bottom of the river. When he got out of the river and on the beach, he tried to run, but he was so stiff that he couldn't. That's why porcupines can't run fast—he got stuff under the water. He was one kind of man when he drowned, but when he came out of the river he saw himself that he was different again. He was a (real) porcupine now.

He thought to himself, "I can't run fast, and all the other animals are faster than I. they are liable to kill me." He thought to himself, "I'm going to learn how to climb trees."

When he got to the middle of the tree, there was Mr. Bear coming along, and the Bear told him, "My, you smell fine. You are made to be eaten."

Porcupine told him, "Well, you are just a little too late. If you had caught me on the beach, you might have eaten me alive, but now I'm in a tree."

The Bear said, "Well, I can climb, too." And he started up the tree.

When he got to this Porcupine, he (Porcupine) hit the Bear with his tail, and Bear got sharp quills in his nose, and he tumbled right down. He said he would not forgive Porcupine for that. That's the end.



LOCAL STORIES

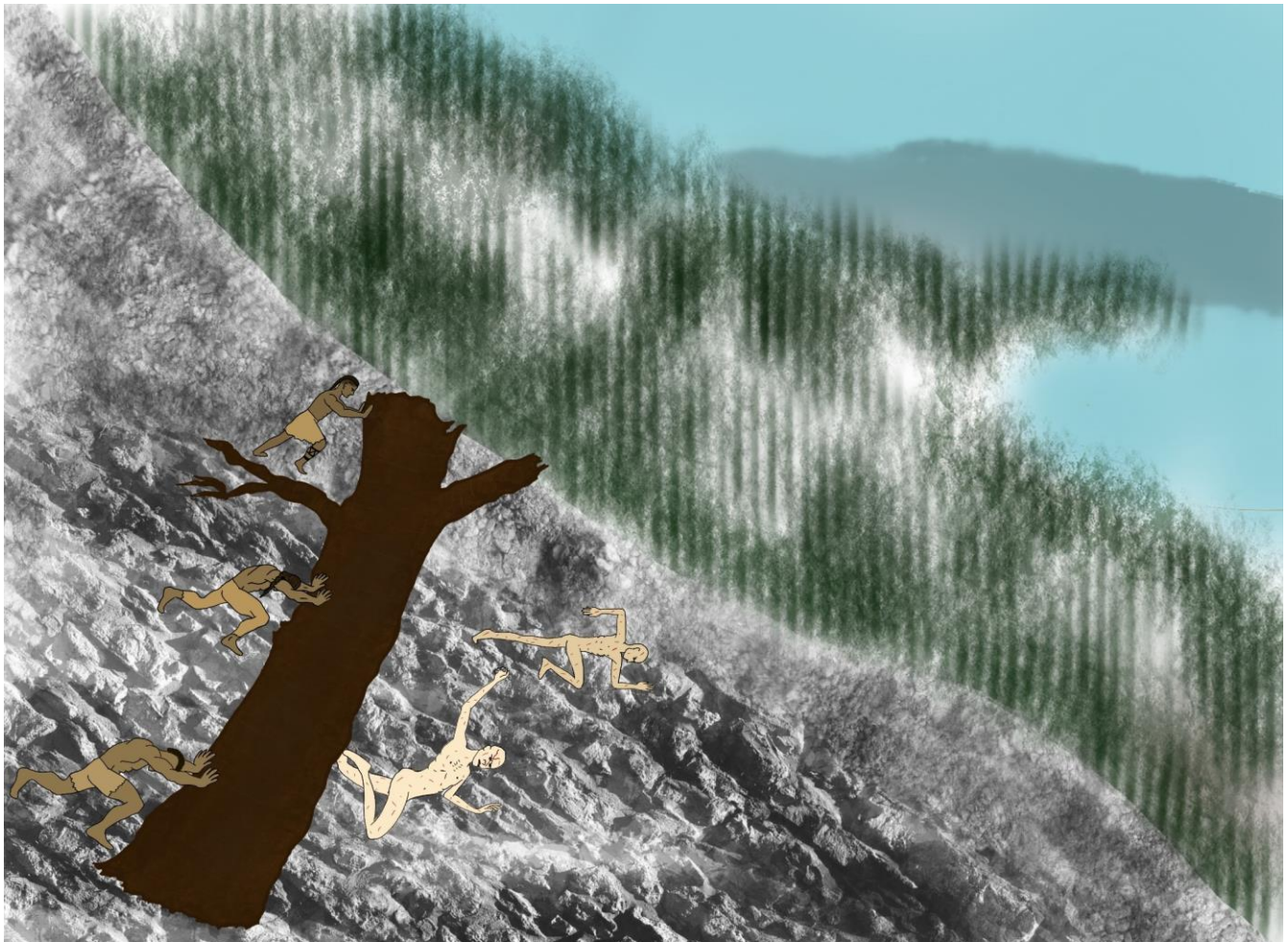


Figure 14 Story of Moosehide Slide - created by Tiffany Taylor

Story of Moosehide Slide

As told by Mary Mcleod

In early days there were cannibals everywhere and they bothered people. So one time people climb hill near where is now Moosehide to get above them. Lots of big trees on these hills that time. People had only axe made of sharp rock in those days. They cut down the biggest tree with stone axe and they throw that tree down the hill on cannibals. That tree start big slide. It kill all the cannibals. That slide is shaped like hide of moose so people call that place Moosehide.

When I was a young girl, my old grandma took me one time. She showed me the bones of those cannibals. They are all covered with moss now. So I know this is true story.

I'm going to tell you another story. One time there was a man and a woman. The woman was in a family way. Everybody else went away and left them. This was because of the cannibals. That husband stayed with his wife because she is pregnant, so cannibals surrounded them. When cannibals came he took her away and hid her in a cave. The husband, he cover this cave with a big rock to hide her. This was because she could not travel fast. The cannibals chase that husband. He led them to a patch of open water at Moosehide. This man jump over the patch of open water at Moosehide. One cannibal jump and fall in and drown. The other cannibal, the same. That is why there is always open water in the winter near Moosehide.

Many years later some families out hunting. Old crow people. One woman is in a family way. Two men went away from group—they fool around, wrestle, then they rest. They woke up to see two man who say “come with us to see our people. Then you can go home again.”

These men took them to a door in the mountain. They took these boys over to old lady in corner. Ask those boys if they hear of that woman who disappear. They tell them they have given her a husband from them. And show them all her children around there. That old woman, she say to them “You tell my husband not to worry, because they take care of me.” Those people, they want to show that woman to those boys. Then those boys go back to tell their people.

Story of Starvation⁸³

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

This happen below Eagle. One time there was an old man with his grandson. He gather lots of food for winter.

One time he hear people laughing and laughing outside. He sent grandson to see and grandson say those people are fooling around with a frog—playing ball—toss and catch—with the frog.

That old man knew you should never make fun of frog or animals. It brings hard times.

All that winter there was no food. Only old man and grandson were safe. All the caches glacier up. So much glacier they can't get into cache to get food.

March came and an old man went out. He finally came upon people with toboggan loads of food. He saw one man making arrows. So he speak out, talk to him. “Just wonder if I can get help. Lots of people have nothing.” They said they would give him food by they did not want to mix with his people. They live alone in the wilderness they say.

⁸³ Cruikshank, J. (1974). *Stories by Mrs. Mary McLeod*. Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource.

“We don’t want you to see us. If you people have that much hard time we help. We’ll put out food for you to take. Divide among yourselves. Tomorrow every family got to come with toboggans, but don’t try to find out what kind of people we are. We don’t want to mix with nobody. Don’t try to find out.”

Lot’s of people that time. Everyone take toboggan and go on snowshoes. Good stuff. Moose meat, sheep. So these people saved them even when they never met them.

Joe Suze’s mother’s mother—our grandma—told us that story.

They help people. People talk to them without seeing them and they answer.

One time I almost saw those people. I went with Louise, wife of Joe Pumble to pick up berries. I’m a kid. She’s carrying baby. I hear soft whistle. Louise grab me and pull me. They throw sticks on her lap. Those sticks are sign—they mean “this many people around you. Beat it. Go back.”

Louise had bunch of broken sticks. “This many people were there” she say. They are kind people. They try to help people they’re after.

So these mountain people are still living somewhere between Dawson and Selkirk, I think.

Story of Old Woman Rock⁸⁴

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

In early days when girl had first period she was sent away back in bushes, one—two miles. She had to sit on her knees—couldn’t stretch her legs out.

One time a girl was sent there—way back behind a bluff, down below Fortymile. All summer she ate nothing but caribou food, grows on rocks. She is told to sit legs bent, but she stretch her legs out straight. That same time that rock was pushed out and split off in the middle of the water—pushed out and stopped in the middle of the river like cat plough. That was because she stretch her legs out.

There’s a big current where she push that rock out. It blocked the channel. So they brought her back and had her push it further so they can get through. That rock look just like the steamboat, all bare. Just solid rock when it’s new.

They say that girl went upriver. Used dog team to get up. Every place she stop you could see sleigh marks. You could see sleigh marks on that big rock too. That girl they say she went upriver by herself and later became Queen Victoria. She’s Indian girl.

I remember when I was young girl, that rock all bare. In 1927, I went back, that rock all covered with trees, bush. Canadian, American flags on that rock.

⁸⁴ Cruikshank, J. (1974). *Stories by Mrs. Mary McLeod*. Dawson City: Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Heritage Library Resource.



Figure 15- The Old Man and Old Woman- created by Darcy McDiarmid

The Old Man and Old Woman⁸⁵

As told by Medicine Man Luke, Interpreted by Arthur

In the Yukon River between Eagle and Fortymile there are two large rocks. The one on the north side the “Old Man,” and the one to the south the “Old Woman.” These two old folks were once together

⁸⁵ Schmitter, F. (1910). *Upper Yukon Native Customs and Folk-Lore*. (I. Arthur, Storyteller) Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

in the middle of the river, but the old woman pushed the old man to the other side because he left her there. So he went north and she went south, but the children grew up around there.

At that time this region was full of all kinds of animals, and they could talk like men. The old man killed off all the bad animals and saved one good one of each kind, which started the families. They have since been unable to talk.

The moose was the head game of the world, because the old man killed all the bad moose first. The big swan was once the head of all birds and animals because it was stronger. All animals came together and had wrestling matches. The little teal duck was the strongest animal in the world. First the swan beat the moose, but the teal duck beat the swan after the swan had conquered all others.

Story of the Great Fish⁸⁶

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

Long time ago when girl have her first period she is sent away by herself for a long time. Her mother is supposed to come to her every day and bring her food. One time this girl wait and her mother stop coming. "How long they think I go without food", she say. In a few days she got up and went back to the village. She found big fish had come out and ate them all up—the whole village. She go back. She build up logs around her hut for protection. She build campfire. She find long sharp stick (pole). She have ashes ready.

That fish come in. She wait till close; then she throw ashes in mouth. She stab fish in stomach with stick. All else in village killed.

Then she went to find other to tell them. They think she is crazy, that she lie. So those men they check up. They go and they see beast she kill it. My, my that's awful story.

Stories⁸⁷

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

At first creation, the world is all bare, all open. No trees like now. There are many beasts. People suffer. One beast like a grizzly bear bother people. They learn how to kill him. Just bow and arrow, no rifle at that time. They get tanned moose skin. Whole bunch of men throw over his head and put snare

⁸⁶ Cruikshank, J. (1974). *Stories by Mrs. Mary McLeod*. Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

around his neck. They kill that grizzly. Sometimes they kill grizzly by driving into pit. Sometimes they sharpen a spear and shove into his chest.

In the old days steamers ran every day down the river. Really expensive. They had to pay wood, captain, cook, deckhands. Steamers all used wood. The woodman got people to cut wood. Then they haul that wood up to town of Dawson and load on steamers.

Lots of wood camps, up rivers, up creeks.

Little Dave told my husband to look after wood camp at Eight Mile Creek, below Moosehide. It was maybe 1940's. We were there nine years. Lots of good berries there—blueberries, raspberries, cranberries, high bush berries, black currants. We have fish trap just up creek from wood camp. Lots of moose, caribou near there.

Bill Lopaschuk lived near and visited. No other people lived right there, but I'm busy all the time. Never lonely. Another family David Taylor came on year but his family got sick. So they burned down the house and had to leave. People visit in summer, police, other people. We stayed there year around. Just the two of us, no kids with us. Kids were in Carcross School then—four kids, two boys and two girls. Nobody came home then in summer. We never see them while they're in school. Kids stay year round, year round in Carcross.

Clifford, my adopted child went to school in Dawson. We applied to have him home one time. If they refuse me I would send him to Eagle. But they say nothing so we take him.

Animals too talk with people.

I made friends with two little foxes—they just come to me but not to my husband—they come and play with me. My child Clifford want to take them in the house, but too much trouble, more than a cat, I guess.

Fox one time took me back to see young ones. All kinds of food and bones there—squirrels and even fish. How do you think they get fish? Probably at night, fish sleep at edge of river, they go down, climb in, go close to edge and catch fish. Only way I think that fox catch fish.

Weasel too is a friend. One weasel at that wood camp came up. I put food out for him, fish sometimes. Soon he brings his friends—his wife I guess and kids. Soon there's seven of them. They come in, start to get at home, climb around on things, jump up on table, everything. One time I tell them, "No, you do not do that. You can't go on table, on bed, on wall. I give you food but you stay down." You know, he hear me and he never jump again. He learn just like that. I just tell one of them and he tell the others. They talk to one another.

One time weasel came to the door. He talk to me for a long time. "I don't know what you talk about. You must be telling me you're going to put up food for the winter." He tells me that he is going to build a cache, then hunt and hide mice and things for winter. Then he goes away for a few days—a week. But he comes back.

Other animals talk too.

Porcupines sing songs and comb their hair with fingernails. They talk like people. Make all kinds of racket.

Grouse call is like man talking.

Coyote whistles like a man.

So when you're in the bush, you're never alone.

Medicine⁸⁸

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

They say one good medicine is what looks like salt between rocks. It's like a powder. Good for cuts and sores. If people have consumption they mix with water and drink.

We use pitch for sores. It comes out between the trees. Use just the clear pitch, not the brown pitch. Rub it on sore. Cover it.

How People Used to Catch Fish on Yukon⁸⁹

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

Before flashlight people used to take birch bark, light fire on it and go along edge of river. They see fish sleep on shore. Then they club fish or scoop fish up in net. When birch burn out they go home with lots of fish.

Traps were never used on Eagle—Fortymile stretch of the river. My husband tell me they use fish traps on Klondike river; he say they are like long fence, fish come in at wide end and go to narrow end, then scoop out.

We never use fish trap down our way. I remember fish traps like in a dream. When I was a very little girl, maybe I see it in Tetlin (Alaska).

⁸⁸ Cruikshank, J. (1974). *Stories by Mrs. Mary McLeod*. Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

At Eagle, use dip net. They need two canoes to help one another dip them out. King salmon at Eagle.

They use it for dog salmon at Dawson, down near shipyard. You need 3 sticks on that net for protection—fish are big. The net is made of babiche.

In the early days there are two ways to save food: dry it or freeze it.

For pemmican you dry meat, boil it in water. Then you pound in grease or lard and some salt. Then when you travel around you don't need fire. You have your meat ready.

You can dry fish, cut in strips. Then pound it with dry fish eggs and stone berries and moose fat. You use the fat from around moose kidneys. Some people add raisins and sugar, but you don't need it.

You can take stone berries. Add to dish of melted lard. Stir with fat. Freeze it. My husband told me about that. I never did it myself.

Fish meat. You use king salmon meat like they get at Eagle and mix in blueberries. Just stir it up. The grease is already in that fish so you don't need to add fat.

To store food, you can put dry fish, dry meat and dry berries up high in cache.

Fresh meat and berries can be put in a hole in the ground, like cellar. You put moss cover inside cellar and it keeps things good. At Eight Mile we put cheese cloth around meat, then moss. This cellar is cold storage in summer, freezer in winter.

Caribou: People from Dawson used to come downriver to hunt caribou sometimes. Long time before I'm a baby people go to Chicken (Alaska) to big caribou corral. They have big caribou corral. They have big snare of moose rope between posts. They do that for moose too, long time ago.

Caribou were thick until the highway was built from Dawson to Alaska. Now all the caribou have gone up the Dempster to the Blackstone.

Fish: At Fortymile there were good fat grayling. They're hard, not soft like some other places. I don't like soft fish. One time families from Fortymile went downriver to below Cold Creek to fish. Mostly people go to Nelson Creek near Fortymile. They put in fish wheel and dry fish. Dave Swanson was below Fortymile and Captain Mosher was above Fortymile. Both had fish camps.

Roots: People pick roots in spring. Roots are best when they break easy when they're fresh. Birch roots are good like that. By midsummer they lose their flavour. In fall time when leaves fall there are some good roots.

Porcupines: People used to eat porcupine too, but the porcupines have gone south, people say.

In early days we eat birds—grouse, ptarmigan, ducks, sometimes goose, but not much swan. But not supposed to eat hawk, eagle, owl.

All year people are busy. In summer people dry fish and get berries. In autumn they hunt moose. In winter they trap, but get caribou and moose while they are trapping.

Ceremonies⁹⁰

As told by Mrs. Mary McLeod

When somebody dies, that's when they have potlach. You should see that they give those days—Hudson's Bay blanket, rifles, calico, refreshments, money too sometime. When they do that woman make fancy moccasins. Sometimes Dawson goes to Selkirk. Sometimes Eagle comes to Dawson. Long time ago McPherson bunch would come to Moosehide every summer. When we have big potlach sometimes it lasts one week. Expensive to keep it going.

When people get married, they have big party for one day, but that's different from potlach.

Even when little children kill animal, fish, they make little party. When people make dry fish they split it, remove backbone, cut skin off forehead. Then sew fish head to main body. When I'm child I see that. I copy them. I got ten little fish. I play with them. I never think. The old people told me they wanted those fish. They keep it.

"Why don't you folks eat it?" I ask them. They just keep it.

Then Christmas they make little party with my fish and everything else in cache—dry fish, meat, everything.

When they do that it's just like pay for child to grow up lucky.

In the old way, a girl is taken two or three miles from the village when she becomes a woman. She wears a big skin hat—we call it a bonnet, like a sun bonnet. It covers her like a cape. She can only look straight ahead. When they have to move people lead them. Her mother brings her food. She makes

⁹⁰ Cruikshank, J. (1974). *Stories by Mrs. Mary McLeod*. Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Library Resource.

the skin cover herself. It is like a fancy cape with beads and feathers. She looks like a princess, like a queen.

It important for a girl to sit squatted on her knees with her legs under her at this time. She's not supposed to stretch her legs in front of her (see story of Old Woman Rock)

In old days women did a lot of beadwork. Used Hudson's Bay beads, porcupine quills, dyes from plants like blueberries, cranberries.

They helped build birch canoes. Men make the inside and outside frame and the cross stick down front, and cover the point at the front. Women sew up with spruce root. Sew around frame. Use spruce pitch seal. Women can do it fast. Can sew up in no time.

To soften bark for birch vessels, heat. To soften for canoes, soak and then sometimes heat.

Spruce tree roots can be split in three. Use outside ones only for sewing. Throw away the inside section. Spruce roots are used to sew bark.

In the old days women snare animals, make skins, tan hides. Now no one does it.

Women learn to tan hide by watching others:

First cut hair off to make smooth surface. Then scrape meat side. Kneel down and clean it on a board in front of you, about four inches wide. Then rinse out blood and dry. Then soak and smoke about five times using rotten wood. Peel River people sometimes use green willow to make smoke. Caribou skins need just a little smoke. Not so hard as moose. You make babiche out of caribou or calf moose.

The first time I make moccasins, I do it on my own. One man tease me, "Make me moccasins." He tease me, thinks I can't. I do it anyway to surprise him. He sure is pleased. Even when I'm a child I got sense to look after myself.

Everything I try myself, watch people, copy, do pretty good. I clean skin, make babiche, make moccasins, set snare, everything.

When I was a kid there's trade show in Dawson. I never went by myself. These days are not like early days. Early days kids go to church with parents. These days church empty, sometimes three people.

In the early days we learn from our grandmothers. They tell story and we listen all the time. Now we try to teach kids. We talk to them about what is right. We remember what our people say. Now kids get too much movies, T.V., all kinds of things. Don't learn language, don't learn things. Try to be Whiteman. This is no good.

The Tale⁹¹

As told by Chief Isaac of Moosehide

Back in the days of Constantine
When Hi Yu Billy ran the line
And marked the posts that stand between
Old Uncle Sam and England's Queen
Then Reds met Whites with friendly hand,
And Reds, when white men joined their band,
This seal of friendship duly paid
With love of fairest Indian maid.

In white man's camp at Fortymile,
The white man wed in white man's style
For helping hand or motherhood
The dusky daughters of the wood.
And oft I've seen on festal night,
With hall bedecked, 'neath candles' light,
The white man lead with loving pride
His laughing, lithesome Indian Bride
In waltz, quadrille, or promenade,
To melody of music made
By ancient organ, to whose strain
Asthmatic bellows wheezed refrain,
While plaintive note of violin,
And merry whistle joined the din,
Or laugh and shout wild haloo
That marked the dance "Old Timers" knew.

Those were the happy tribal days,
The white man went the white man's ways;
Now delving near, now seeking far
On mountain summit, stream or bar,
With hearts unheeding storm or cold,
They searching sought their god—the gold;
While oft around the camp fires ring
This song I've heard the daring sing.

SONG

Out in the wilds, where the world is waste
Under the Arctic sky—
Love in a grave, with ice encased,
Where at midnight hour strange forms are traced,

⁹¹ John North (as told by Isaac, T. M. (1908). *Tale of the Days of Hi Yu Bill and It's Royal Commission*. Toronto: The Moore Print-Shop.

Spectral shadows by shadows chased,
As the Northern Lights flash by—
Where phantom fingers have snow wreathes placed,
That's where the daring lie.

Far from the trails in the storm and cold,
Never a human nigh—
Restless seekers for earth's red gold,
Delving deep in the frozen mold,
In the very heart of the Ice King's hold
Where the glacier grim towers high—
Dreaming of sun-lit days of old—
That's where the daring sigh.

Starving in camp at the final stand,
Happy if comrades by—
Smiling at fate, or with freezing hand
Waving adieu to a beggared band,
Sending soft word to some sunny land,
Bidding a last good bye—
With a nameless grave for the "pay" that's "panned,"
That's where the daring die.

The red man laden from the chase
At white man's fire was welcome face,
His haunch of caribou or moose,
Exchanged for articles of use, through somewhat savoring of mart
Were gifts in truth from heart to heart,
No price was named—all dealings then,
Were those 'tween man and honest men.

But all changed when Carmack's tale
Came ringing down the Yukon's trail,
And told of wondrous golden streak
On rabbit, now Bonanza Creek;
It filled the white man's heart with greed,
In haste he joined the made stampede
And left behind his Indian spouse,
With ruined hopes and broken vows.
No more along the trail of life
To list the loving name of wife,
While oft 'tween sobs, when heart was sad,
She cursed the gold that made men mad.

The Great Stampede⁹²

As told by Chief Isaac of Moosehide

From mountain's top I oft did view
In countless herds the caribou,
Or seen in air the honking geese
In lines that never seemed to cease,
Or when the spring there comes the proof
And Yukon burst its winter's roof,
I've watched the ice floes seaward trend
Processional with scarce an end.

'Twas thus the host of strangers came,
With minds alert and hearts aflame,
And willing hands to test the tales
Of hidden wealth in Klondyke vales.
Like flocks in spring from out the South
They clustered round the Klondyke's mouth,
Till Dawson City sprang to birth
With citizens from all earth.
And there did white man's law prevail,
From highest Court to lowest jail;
And ever swift on white man's tracks
Official gatherers of tax
Would from the toilers rudely wrest
Percentages on wealth possessed.

The weary woodsman's troubles o'er
With little raft scarce touched the shore,
Ere he with consternation saw
Some hired minion of the law
A seizure notice fix on same,
For some unknown, unheard of claim;
While protest met the speech, with frown,
"I represent," "I am the Crown."
The winter long—the needed fire,
Withheld his victim's righteous ire,
And wise he was who gave the balm
That white men use for itching palm.

Where miners thronged was writ no book
Of records on which men might look,
Or system by which could be found

⁹² John North (as told by Isaac, T. M. (1908). *Tale of the Days of Hi Yu Bill and It's Royal Commission*. Toronto: The Moore Print-Shop.

If claims were closed, or open ground;
All entries seemed masonic work
With secret held by single clerk,
Who office used to find alright
The questions paid for previous night.

I've seen the wearied turn away
From waiting hundreds day by day,
And see some source to gain their right
By channels other than in sight;
The man was met to intervene,
A smooth and silent "go between,"
The lore was lacked, the questions prayed,
They got forwith and duly paid;
Or if 'twere record wished for claim
He did the business much the same,
Conceding always on the staff
That some one held a silent half,
Which proven rich, meant wine with feast,
Or head from normal size increased;
If bed rock held no glittering store,
It lapsed, and ne'er was heard of more.

I've seen men standing in the snow
When frost was "sixty-four below;"
In hundreds lined at Postal door
For hours, till term of waiting o'er,
From hast search, in careless way,
A clerk would answer, "None to-day."
To those distressed or others vexed,
The autocrat said sharply "next."

The simple sadly turned away
To wait in line another day.
The knowing swiftly sought the man
Had liaison with courtesan,
And stated sum agree to pay
For longed for mail that came her way.
To all had eyes it well was known
To women preference was shown;
While men for days their time might bide,
No woman's entrance was denied,
Who had for partner in her work
The pass word of official clerk,
Who scanned her "list" and searched with pains,
And shared with her the ill-got gains.

The wise ones came and wisely saw,

Then hide away to Ottawa;
With Placer claim unsatisfied,
They there acquired a county side. And it was deemed no idle tale
That methods here did there prevail,
And goodly share or princely fee
Was only door to powers that be.

The white man's press throughout the world
To all who dared, had welcome hurled,
And ne'er was seen on earth till then
Such host of strong and stalwart men,
The best of manhood's glorious prime,
From every land and every clime.
They sought the gold, but everywhere
Seemed held by some concessionaire,
And loud they cursed with ample cause
The travesty on British laws,
Till disappointed, sullen, sore.
They quit the land for evermore.

In Indian camp the braves who lead,
Are famed for noble thought or deed,
In white man's town it seemed alas;
Each office Chief was knave or ass;
And honest ass more trouble gave
By stupid rules, than artful knave.
Thus on and on for hours I might
The cruel wrongs I've seen recite,
That in the name of the holy right
On Golden Yukon cast a blight,
When white men prayed their God above,
It seemed that his special brand of love
Was meant to fill the faithful's heart
In Meeting House but not in mart;
E'en those who would like angles speak,
Had human nature's old wolf streak;
They'd feign and fawn if gifts were there,
And rend the hand if hand were bare.

Mable Henry⁹³

“Some people go around to different places just to get stories, to get a cup of tea. No! They go to these old people houses, split wood or cut wood or something just to listen to their stories, eh. That’s how you get paid from them but today if some of those people remember that, they would. It would be nice to transfer that, you know, so that other younger generation would know.”

“My dad, I could remember when I was a little kid, he always tell us to SIT DOWN around him and tell you a story. And then, I wouldn’t listen to him because I’m took crazy, I guess, I don’t know, silly, I still silly. And now today I’m sorry because I never listen to him. You know all those rocks, all that slide, the rocks and rocks way down by Moosehide, below Moosehide. Every little mark on those rocks, he tell us a story about it and I wasn’t there to listen and it was so terrible. I was sorry that I didn’t listen to him.”

Arthur (Archie) Roberts⁹⁴

Oh yes, I see the fish trap. They use to do it over here in Klondike... they used to call it Tl’o-ndek. Tl’o-ndek that means...lots of grass in that creek. That’s where they fish. Fish can’t see trap. They call Tl’o-ndek, then the white man come, “What’s this creek name?” “Tl’o-ndek”, they say. “Oh you mean Klondike!” That’s why it got Klondike name.”

Gerald Isaac⁹⁵

“Oh, lots of stories about Moosehide. I remember the seasonal celebrations, especially around Christmas, New Years and Easter time. We always received visitors from Fort McPherson who came into the village by dog team. The dog teams- I’ll never forget them. They were so beautifully ornamented with beadwork, pompoms and sliver bells. The dog teams were just beautiful! When the Fort McPherson people came into the village of Moosehide, it was a real exciting gathering. The celebrations between Christmas and New Years would go on for almost two weeks, day and night non-stop, the feasting, the cooking, the dancing and the excitement at the community hall was just tremendous. I remember being there with my grandmother at these happy occasions. When I became tired, grandmother fixed a blanket on the bench and I crawled in for a sleep. The women would cook and the men would supply the firewood. They also played the fiddles, and other instruments and generally had a good time.”

⁹³ College, D. S. (1994). *Moosehide: An Oral History*. Dawson City: Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Heritage Library Resource.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ College, D. S. (1994). *Moosehide: An Oral History*. Dawson City: Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Heritage Library Resource.

“Oh, there is much to say about life in the village in those early days. The Fortymile Caribou Herd, for example, used to cross between the Moosehide Indian Village and the Midnight Sun Dome and swim across the Yukon River towards the shipyard. There would be hundreds and thousands of them crossing the river, just like a moving land mass. I remember seeing this as a child and I don’t know how many years afterwards it continued but it didn’t continue for very long. That was one of the distinct memories.”

Percy Henry⁹⁶

“Well, I could tell you the last... I just heard this but we all just hear things and because some of the stories I will tell, may be two hundred year old. Some of the stories I tell, may be hundred year old but it passed on to elder, so he heard it when he was kid. And he told it when he got old, so that kid heard it, when he got old he pass it on. So that’s how the Indian story go. The Indian story is something never been written on a paper or nothing, it’s just memory.”

⁹⁶ Ibid.

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