

From The Archives



Welutatum
Wasco
Age about 100

Albert Kukup
Tenino
Age about 70

One of McKay's scouts said
to have captured Capt. Jack

Pipeshire
Wishram

Bill Charlie
Wishram

Tullex Hollequitta
Wasco
Age about 85

One of Donald McKay's scouts
in Mexico War 1913

N.G. Seaman
Oregonian

Louis Brown
Yakima interpreter

GROUP OF WARM SPRING AND YAKIMA CHIEFS.
Jan. 23, 1916

REPRESENTATIVES, at hearings regarding fishing rights on the Columbia River at The Dalles, pose in front of Portland's

City Hall on a wintry day in 1916.

How Coyote Got His Power



Coyote Story

(As part of the Indian Vision Series, Accuracy Records, Inc. asked Jay Silverheels (alias Tonto) to relate American Indian Legends collected from the Northwest Tribes. The following legend was transcribed from the recording of Silverheels. The introductory material appeared on the record jacket.)

American Indian legends are unique and very meaningful, but it is most unfortunate that they have been neglected. Mainly, we feel that their content has been misunderstood. Indian Legends are traditional expressions of Indian Education. This is the beauty of the legends. They are not scientific teachings, but learning experiences from which wisdom flows. Indian thought is a harmonious link between man and nature.

Indian Legends are a description of how things were created and how changes were made for the better. You might say in a parallel — stories of creation in the white man's Bible.

When Mother Earth was very young, the Great Spirit called the animal people together for a meeting. They came for all parts of the world. The Great Spirit told them that soon a different kind of people would be coming to live with them on Earth. The Great Spirit spoke to them: "Before the new people come, all you animal people must have names. Some of you have names now, some of you haven't. But tomorrow all will have names."

"In the morning as the first light of day shows in the sky, come to my lodge and choose your name. The first to come may choose any name he or she wants. The next person may take any other name. That is the way it will go until all the names are taken. Choose well, my children, for the name you choose will be with you forever. Along with this name I will give you a job to do, and this job will be yours and yours alone."

That talk made the animal people very excited. Each wanted a proud name and power to rule some tribe or some part of the world. And

everyone planned to get up early and hurry to the Great Spirit's lodge.

Coyote, the Imitator, bragged that nobody would get there before him. He walked among the people and told them that he would be the first. Coyote did not like the name Imitator. He was called Imitator because he pretended to be other people. He thought he could do anything that other people did. And he pretended to know everything. He would ask a question and when the answer was given he would say, "I knew that before. I did not have to be told." Such smart talk did not make friends for Coyote. Nor did he make friends by the foolish things he did and the little tricks he played on people.

Coyote bragged, "I shall have my choice of the three most powerful names: Grizzly Bear, Eagle or Salmon."

Now Coyote's twin brother Soft Fur, who at the next sun took the name Fox, laughed: "Don't be too sure, Imitator. Maybe you will have to keep the name you have."

Coyote's voice was angry. "I'm tired of that name. Let someone else carry it. Let some old person take it. Someone who cannot win at war. I am going to be a great warrior. My brother, I will make you big when I am called Grizzly Bear, Eagle or Salmon."

Fox laughed again. "Your strong words mean nothing. Better go to your tepee and get some sleep or you will not wake up in time to choose any name."

Coyote walked back to his tepee. He told himself that he would not sleep any that night. He would stay wide awake. He entered the lodge and saw his three sons. They were hungry but Coyote had brought nothing for them to eat. Their mother the Mound Digger, who after the naming day was known as Mole, sat at one side of the doorway.

Mole was a good woman. Always loyal to Coyote in spite of his mean ways, his mischief-making and his foolishness. She looked up and said, "Have you no food for the children? They are starving. I can find no roots to dig."

Coyote answered, "Ha! I am no common person. I am going to be a great leader tomorrow, do you know that? I will have a new name. I will be Grizzly Bear. Then I can take care of my enemies with ease. And I shall need you no longer. You are growing too old to be the wife of a great warrior."

Mole said nothing. She turned to her corner of the lodge and collected a few old bones which she put into a cooking basket. With two stakes she lifted hot stones from the fire and dropped them into the basket. Soon the water boiled and there was weak soup for the hungry children. Coyote ordered, "Gather plenty of wood for the fire. I am going to sit up all night." Mole obeyed and she and the children went to bed.

Coyote sat watching the fire. It was clear to him what he was to do. He thought, "I must get the first name for myself because I don't want to be powerless." He got up and walked around. Soon he became tired from walking. He went to the side of the tepee

and laid against it. It felt good, but soon his eyes grew heavy and he thought to himself, "Oh, I see now. As soon as I close my eyes I become sleepy." So he picked up two little sticks and he used them to keep his eyes open. Before long he was fast asleep even though the small sticks kept his eyes wide open.

Coyote overslept and the sun was high in the sky when Mole called him. She had already returned with her new name from the Great Spirit's Lodge. Mole loved Coyote but she did not want him to have a big name and be powerful. For then, she feared, he would leave her. That is why she did not wake him at daybreak.

Only half awakened, thinking it was early morning, Coyote jumped at the sound of Mole's voice and ran to the lodge of the Great Spirit. None of the other animal people were there. Coyote was pleased. Blinking his sleepy eyes, he walked into the lodge. In a strong voice Coyote said, "I am going to be Grizzly Bear. That shall be my name."

Great Spirit said, "The name of Grizzly Bear was taken at dawn."

And Coyote said, "Then I will be called Eagle."

And the Great Spirit answered, "Eagle flew away at sun-up."

Coyote said, "All right then, I will be called Salmon."

And the Great Spirit spoke, "All the names except your own have been taken. No one wished to have the name Coyote."

Poor Coyote's knees grew weak. He sank down beside the fire that blazed in the great tepee, and the heart of the Great Spirit was touched. The Great Spirit said,

"Imitator, you must keep your name. It is a good name. You slept long because I wanted you to be the last one here. I have seen that you are different from all the other animal people. You are wiser and smarter. I have important work for you."

"There is much to do before the New People come. You are to be Leader of All the Tribes. Many bad things are on the Earth. They bother and hurt people and the Tribes cannot increase as I wish. These monsters must be stopped. It is for you to conquer them with your mind. By doing that and for all the good things you do you will be honored and praised by the people that are here now and those that come afterward."

"To make your work easier, I will give you a special Power. The power to change things. No one else will have this Power. When you are in danger, whenever you need help, call on your Power. It will do much for you. With it you can change anything you wish. It is your way."

"To your twin brother Fox I have given another Power. The Power to bring back your life. Your bones may be scattered far, but if there is one hair left, the Power can make life again."

"You will have many battles. You will win some, others you will lose. But you will bring many changes to the Earth."

"Now go, Coyote, and do well the work I have chosen for you."