

XII. The Geography of Memory Recovering Stories of a Landscape's First People

(Eileen Delehanty Pearkes, 2002)

58. Mountain Goat and the Origin of Huckleberry

Told by Nancy Wynecoop, Lakes

Transcription of oral history and oral culture of the Lakes Indians is rare. This story was told to anthropologist William Elmendorf by elder Nancy Wynecoop in 1935-1936 during Elmendorf field work with the Lakes Indians. This is exactly the myth as it appears in Elmendorf's field work with the Lakes Indians. This is exactly the myth as it appears in Elmendorf's notebook, with paragraph breaks added for legibility. "Myth times" was also called "the time when they made things" and refers to the creation period in Lakes Indian oral history.

Eagle (malqa?nu'ps), person who lived at Kettle Falls, she was a very beautiful creature in myth times, her teachers decided to give her to the best runner, report was sent all over and competitors come to Kettle Falls, course led over rough ground and precipice, one precipice hung directly over the Columbia.

Mountain Goat (sɣ'əɣ'i?) lived far up north in the mountains, he sent his sons the eldest had already come to Kettle Falls to court the Eagle, she despised him and so did all the people, their legs, big horns, thick body, Old Goat decides to send rest of his sons and restore his honor, they brought huckleberries (st'əxáʔq) as their contribution to the doings.

When they got to Kettle Falls the people all said: "here are some of those ugly creatures coming, how can they ever run a race with their thick bodies," all the racers were out there with their contributions, the goats were so unpopular that their contribution was set aside and not grouped with the others, the other brother goat was sitting by himself despondently, the brothers planted a huckleberry bush they had brought from home in front of this brother, he ate all the berries off it and felt all spruced up and recovered his self-respect after this act of kindness.

The people finally decided to let the goats run although nobody thought they could win, at the beginning of the race the goats all grouped together while running and everybody laughed to see them do this, after running they came to the cliff and raced right across the face of the rock, none of the other animals could do that, so they won the race by a long way.

At the beginning the old grandmothers went over and were going to throw the huckleberries in the river, when they saw them go across the face of the cliff, they won the people's esteem, the grandmothers then brought the choice basket of berries over to the girl for her to taste and name, she named it the "sweet berry", from the bush the goats had planted come all the huckleberries now in this part of the country.

The goats after the race did not force themselves on the people or Eagle they just set out for home, Eagle followed after them: Eagle said that when she saw the goats in her home at Kettle Falls she thought them very shabby, but as they traveled toward home their coats became white as snow and she saw how they nibbled only the dewy tips of fresh grass, she tended carefully Old Goat and was able to

accompany the goats about the mountains. So old Goat adopted her and she married the eldest son and stayed in the mountains she builds her nest there still.

Fish Hawk (osprey), Buzzard, Water Snake, Mountain Magpie, all natives of the place all followed after the goats to marry them.

Water snake never got as far as the mountains where the sn^ʷíckst live, just to where the Kootenay hits the Columbia.

Eagle married the oldest goat.

Some of the girls followed the goats when they got up to where the old man lived. The Fish Hawk (c'ixc'í^w) saw Jack Rabbit (ʷənaʔnik) "Long Ears", Rabbit was sitting in the corner and every time he moved his head his ears flopped and made her giggle, she also laughed at the old chief goat because of his appearance, instead of attitude of reverence, the boys didn't like this at all so they sent her away, she came down out of the mountains into the Columbia River Valley, can be heard screaming as she fishes there yet.