

KLIKATAT SHAHAPTIN INDIAN LEGEND  
Virginia Rosalyn Beavert, Translator/ collector

Shahaptin legends are oral teaching methods for children to learn about the value of life. To teach about history, the story-teller name people and places, while legends name animals and natural wildlife to teach about the environment and how to care for it. Adolescents learn to identify these things by sight and how to name them. They learn to interpret the relationship between Creation and the Indian people.

KLIKATAT CEDAR BASKET LEGEND

One time in the animal world there lived a young girl at White Salmon River. Her name was S+NMI (Grey squirrel), and she lived at White Salmon, a place where the L ATAXAT AMA (Kliikatat People) live. Before the Humans came, the animal people lived at L ATAXAT (Kliikatat). A long time ago everything was human, the animals, plants, and creations were like humans are today. They walked and talked like we do.

S+NMI, who lived near the White Salmon River was AYAYASH (retarded). She was unable to do things like other girls. Her mind appeared slow and her fingers were clumsy. She was shunned by other people because they did not understand her. For this reason, she lived all by herself near a NANK PATAT, cedar tree. During the day she would sit underneath this huge tree and daydream in the shade because there was nothing else to do.

Nank tree watched and he worried about S+nmi. He was sorry for her. "That poor girl should be learning the important things other little girls are learning." One day, he spoke to her, "AANA, INMI ATS (pay attention my little sister), I cannot allow you to grow up like this, not learning anything. You must be taught something to help yourself. I will teach you. Go to the mountains and find this grass called YAAY, bear grass. This grass is used for weaving baskets. This is what I will teach you. Pick this grass by pulling it out by the roots; dry it in the AAN, sun, and bundle it up tied neatly. Then go pick different-colored berries and plants for coloring this grass to decorate your basket. Come back here and dig up my tenderest roots; split them into thin straight splices and dry them in the sun. You must do exactly as I say. If you follow my instructions accurately, someday you will be famous for your work."

\*call attention  
to what you  
will say

S+nmi packed her KAP+N (root digger), XAP+L MI (flint knife) and everything she needed and walked towards the P+T' XANUK (mountains), until she reached that certain place where she saw the plants growing there just like Nank-tree had told her. She dug the yaay and separated the stalks and laid them out in the AAN (sun) to dry. After they were dry, sized them up, and tied them up into neat little bundles. Then she picked the different-colored berries for coloring, and hurried home.

S+nmi took the bundle to Nank Tree and she showed him what she did. "I did as you asked me to do. Here are the things you wanted me to get." Nank-tree was very pleased and he said: "Yes, you followed my instructions like any normal girl should. Now you must dig my M+TS'AY, tender roots and slice them with your xap i+ mi into strips, and dry them in the Aan."

PT'INIKS, the girl worked hard all day. When she became discouraged and tired she would stop, think about it, and tell herself. "I have worked very hard this long, I can't stop now. I will follow his instructions and find out what it is that I'm supposed to learn." Encouraged by her new urge to learn like P' IIX PTILIMA (like normal girls) she continued working until she completed her task.

When she completed Nank-tree's instructions, she spread her K'+ XLI (Tule Mat) and spread all of the things she had gathered on it to show Nank-Tree. He was very pleased with what he saw and said: "KUU-MISH(All right), now you must do this with it. You are to weave a WÁPAAS (cedar basket), like this." And he proceeded to show her how to weave a small cedar basket \*(wapaas is a small cedar-picking basket). Pt'iniks selected the materials she was supposed to use and began to weave her first cedar wapaas. She worked all day and far into the night until she, finally, finished one basket. She was surprised by what she did. She told Cedar-Tree, "I did this INKNINK (all by myself), This is the first time I ever wove a cedar basket."

Nank was very proud of her when Pt'iniks exclaimed; "I watched other girls doing things like this, but nobody wanted to show me how to weave a basket." He was pleased because she was extremely XWAAMI (proud of herself). \*\*(self-esteem) Nank-Tree admonished, "Don't get too conceited. You must still pass a test. Take this basket and dip it in the water. If the water does not drip out of it, you have accomplished your goal." The girl carried the basket down to WATAM (the lake) and filled it with water. Alas, the water ran right through the basket. She went back home dragging her feet in disappointment. Her heart was very sad and she cried when she told Cedar Tree what had happened. He told her not to feel sorry for herself. "You are about to learn an important lesson in your life. To gain strength in character you will face and learn to overcome many trials and disappointments. To gain perfection it takes many hours of practice. This is how you become talented. Now you must go out into the PT+N (woods) and find some designs. Observe and seek out the things of nature and bring it back pictured in your mind. This is a lesson to teach you how to observe the beauty around you, and how to use it to make beautiful things." When she was encouraged this way, she could not resist becoming more determined to succeed because NANK had so much confidence in her, she did not want to disappoint him. She was determined to make beautiful baskets.

S+nmi walked for many days looking at everything, in a way she never

River and dipped it into the water. It did not leak. She was very proud and NANK was proud too.

"The most important test is now to come. You must take this water-tight basket to the hills behind a PSHXU, sagebrush where you will defecate, and then sacrifice this basket into it as an offering. This will teach you about humility and sacrifice. Afterward, you are to make five more baskets and give them away to the oldest women, ± MAMATUMA, in your village. This will teach you generosity and respect for your elders." (This tradition is still practiced today by the ± ATA XAT ± AMA, Klikat People) S ± NMI hesitated, but when NANK admonished her that if she didn't follow this tradition she would never become an accomplished TS'APX -ANI- L A, Basket-Maker. She wanted, so much, to become a good basket weaver she did as Nank instructed.

### THE LEGENDARY PROCLAMATION

SPILYAY, Legendary Coyote, the LAW-MAKER happened along at this time. XWASHXWAY, Blue Jay, the forest gossip had told him what was going on at Lataxat, White Salmon River. Spilyay held a conference with Nank to find out the details. He inspected the beautiful cedar basket and was very impressed with what he saw and declared his prediction:

"Not far from now, there are different kind of People coming to this part of the land. They are so close now, you can hear their footsteps. From this day forward, this land called L ataxat, Klikat, will be known for its famous Ts'apx-nmi Wapaas (cedar picking-basket) ku Xlaam, (cedar storage-basket) baskets."

This is the reason the people who are from ± ATAXAT Klikat, are famous for their cedar baskets. Other tribes have traveled for hundreds of miles to trade with these people for their baskets.

Teaching wisdom by means of legends is MIMAWIT, an old tradition, taught by the "Elders" to young boys and girls to share with others; to observe nature and show respect for it by protecting it. It teaches how to practice humility and not to be egotistical. It is important to be proud of yourself, but more important to share your skills with others who are less fortunate, because they, too, have hidden talents to share. There are several lessons legends offer for teachers and students to study and to discuss in the classroom. It is a unique way to teach values and to learn the Indian names of characters and things of nature.

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Write a short paper of comments  
about this story.

looked at things before. She became confused because she was not sure what she was supposed to be seeking. Suddenly, a WAXPUSH (rattlesnake) crossed her path and he spoke to her: "TILA (Grandchild) see CHALUTIMASH the design on my back? Use them to decorate the edgings on your basket." S+i nmi was grateful to grandfather rattlesnake, and tried to visualize how she was going to put those edgings on her basket.

She continued walking down the trail until she saw PATU(Mount Adams) peaking at her over the rim of a mountain. He spoke to her, "Little Sister, come look at me closely; I am like a design. The outline of my snow-peak is like a design." She looked at Patu's beautiful snow-covered body and thought to herself, "Truly, the peaks look like designs. It will make a wonderful picture in my basket." She was grateful to PYAP (Big Brother) PATU and journeyed on.

Further down the trail, KAXNU (grouse) ran across her path. Surprised, she stopped when he spoke to her, "See my tracks? You may copy my footprints for your design." P'tiniks examined Grouse's footprints and thought, "Yes indeed, those tracks look just like designs." She was grateful to Grouse and went on.

Several days later when it was getting dark, she decided it was time to return home. She came to a brook, she was thirsty, and decided to take a drink. She knelt down on her knees by this WALA (small brook) and heard someone speaking to her, "Look at me Little Sister, see the reflections and the designs they make with waves on my body? You may make designs like these on your baskets." S+i nmi stared carefully into the water and saw unusual things in the water reflected like pretty pictures. S i nmi thought what beautiful designs these would make on her baskets; especially, the reflection of YASLAMS, Evening Star, shimmering brilliantly in the sky above.

MAAYSX, the next day, S i nmi spread her K'ixli under the Cedar Tree and described the personal designs she was given in the forest by her new relatives. "Now that (ASHUKWAA) I experienced nature and the beauty it provides for me and my TIINMA people, I'm much wiser and have more confidence in myself to do what you have been teaching me. I know I can do it!"

P'tiniks sat down and began to weave her second basket, the one with beautiful designs. (The first basket was not elaborately designed because it is a burden basket used for common tasks.) She became so engrossed in her work she forgot all about (± KW'I) the time until she completed one TS'APX, cedar basket. It was the most beautiful basket to see. It had the diamond designs of the rattlesnake around the edge; the Mount Adams design centered around the basket; the Evening Star shining brightly in between and the footprints of Grouse inserted here and there. When she was finished she showed it to NANK for approval. He told her, "Now you must pass another important test. Take this basket to NCH'I-WANNA, Columbia River, dip it into the water to test for water-tightness. She took the basket down to the Columbia