

Flesch-Kincaid level 3.2

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Tlingit Oral Narratives

Alive in the Eddy

Transcribed from a recording by Andrew P. Johnson
February, 1975

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Also titled, Kiks.ádi Dog Salmon

And it was told that he became one of the strongest **ixt'** of the Kiks.ádi people. He practiced **telepathy** and **portation**. He could communicate with Kake from here. That was the first wireless station in Alaska.

When they brought him down he became one of the strongest **ixt'** among the Kiks.ádis. And later on he **composed** a song. It did not become the national song but we sing it quite often. You don't dance to this song, like you would any other. You have mountain sheep wool dyed red. The women wear them hanging from their ears. The first verse you swing towards your left. The second verse you swing to the right. And the men keep time with the long sticks with the **emblems** on them.

stood up. He thought he stood up. Instead of that, the people in the canoe called out, "Here jump!"

Finally the father hooked him, brought him ashore and the mother started to cut the head, and they found under the skin was this copper rope. She recognized him.

Then all the women cleared out and **cleansed** the whole smoke house. They put him on the platform right above the door. They had no fire in it. They put the body of the fish there and they put a very nice skin blanket over it. For several days it was there.

And finally, they heard the blue flies' sound up there. And it began to change into a tune. The platform was very large. Big enough to hold a human being. As time went on they knew it wasn't a blue fly, but a person singing. And they went up there on a ladder and took his body down. He returned back with his own people.

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Vocabulary

- milt
- dorsal fin
- implements
- stream-lined
- lxt' (shaman)
- telepathy
- portation
- emblems

age, when the head was the size of a grown man's neck, they would slip this endless copper rope over his head. And the child **commenced** to grow, and they wouldn't take this off; he died with it on. And this showed the person was from an **aristocratic** family. And they put this around the neck of Aak'wtaatseen when he was a baby, being of an aristocratic family.

And when he came nearer the river, the father and the mother saw a very nice looking, **stream-lined** dog salmon. It was so pretty, a very large dog salmon, unusually larger than the rest, with no marks on it. It was a perfect fish.

Aak'wtaatseen recognized his family before he went on up the river. As they came to where the river people were going, some of his friends, some relatives, were going in a canoe. The fish people told Aak'wtaatseen, "There is your clan going up there. They know who you are. Stand up and look at them." Aak'wtaatseen in his mind

would tell him where they were.

According to the Tlingit people, way out in the ocean, in the middle of the ocean in the deep places, there is no light. It's all dark. And when they came to the line where it gets dark, Aak'wtaatseen saw very fearful things ahead of him. There were large eyes looking at him. And each time before an individual went past the line he would let out a war cry and he'd rush right by those places in a hurry. As they went by, some of them were bitten. And when the salmon come to the river you find teeth marks on some of them. You never knew what bit them, what kind of creature bit them.

At this time we already had copper; we were using copper for **implements** and **ornaments**. There were those who worked in metal who would make copper wires. They made it into the form of a rope. Very flexible. More like chains all linked together. They would measure a full-grown man's neck, and when the child got to be a certain

The story I am going to tell you belonged to the Kiks.ádi clan. The event took place near Sitka at the Nakwasena River.

Toward fall time we go to Nakwasena and we dry salmon. At first we dry the humpies. But we don't dry very many humpies. It doesn't keep very well for the winter. We only dry a few of them—maybe 25 or 50 of them per family. We eat it right away. We don't keep it for the coming winter.

Then comes the fresh run of the dog salmon, right from the ocean. We do not dry very many of them; we only dry a few. The eggs from the female dog salmon are still in one piece and the **milt** from the male is still hard and all in one piece when they first come in.

Now that dried salmon, that dried dog salmon is only kept for soaking. They are fresh run salmon from the ocean. When it's dried, it dries like a piece of wood. You

couldn't even bite it. You couldn't take a bite off of it, even if you **broiled** it. They use it for soaking. They soak it down at the beach, maybe for 12 hours. By that time it's soaked enough and they **boil** it for breakfast. With seal oil it tastes good, especially to those who have grown up eating such food. They enjoy it very much; I know I do.

When the **dorsal fin** on the dog salmon begins to show white spots on top, on the end, they would take these dog salmon. The male dog salmon milt would be so soft it would start running. When it breaks open it almost runs out of it. And the female dog salmon eggs are very loose. If you just squeeze the stomach, eggs begin to fall out. Now quite a lot of these are dried for the coming winter. And when you broil it over the fire the flesh is crumbly, nice and soft. Even the old people enjoy it, even though they haven't got very strong teeth. It's very delicious. It doesn't contain very much oil. It's mostly fish

acquainted with them, but you have never thought of them as people. You thought of them as creatures of the sea."

As he came near the place with the salmon people, he heard people singing Indian songs that were very happy, and beating a drum. You could see feathers flying all over. The feather, the symbol of peace. He wanted to see who they were. He looked through a crack, and as he looked through the crack he felt something on his face. It seemed to be covering that part of his face where he thought he feathers were flying around. When he reached up and scratched it he found on him herring eggs. Those were herring people putting on a big dance.

After Aak'wtaatseen left he went back and one day they told him, "We are going back to your country, to the place that you came from." They kept on going. Everybody was paddling. He wasn't paddling; he was sitting right in the middle of the canoe, and each time they

not even bear it. He felt like weeping. But he decided he wasn't going to weep. He rebelled. He didn't want to eat anything. They tried to give him food but he wouldn't take it. They took him to the mouth of a large river. On each side of the river, just as it enters the ocean, there was a creature in the water. One on his side, another one on his other side.

They were the happiest creatures. All day long they danced. They'd go up and down in the water and come up again, and then would go down again. Aak'wtaatseen hadn't laughed now for many days. They took him to one side of the river and put his arms around one of the creatures. They told him, "Now, you hang on tight, don't be afraid of getting drowned." As he put his arms around the creature, the creature began to dance with him. It amused him so much he started laughing. And they put his arms around the other one. After that he was himself again.

Now one day they told him, "We're going to go to a big diner that's going on. It's put on by different people. The people are people whom you know. You are well

flesh and not much oil.

And this is what they were doing in Nakwasena. People were there to put up food. They were already putting up the winter supply of dog salmon, drying it up **thoroughly**. And the boys were having lots of fun on the beach. We are taught to capture birds and animals alive. But we do not keep them as pets. The moment we catch them we let them go. Sometimes we use snares. Aak'wtaatseen, a young boy of 12 or 14, was playing with a snare his father made him near the shore of the river.

Now, a lot of loose salmon eggs are put in the bottom of the river under the snare. And the seagulls have a habit of dipping down. As they dip down to eat the salmon eggs they'll put their head through the snare. When they come back it's around their neck.

We'd have lots of fun. We'd go down there. Our mothers would put dry clothes on us. In less than 5 minutes we are soaking wet from head to feet. Even the

shoes are all soaking wet.

And that's what Aak'wtaatseen was doing, and they were having lots of fun, counting how many seagulls they had caught. In the midst of all that, Aak'wtaatseen had gone home to eat his noon lunch. He was very hungry. He knew what to do. He ran on up to the house where his mother was preparing the winter supply of food.

He asked his mother, "Mother, may I have a piece of dried fish?" His mother gave him a piece. "Here, you eat that." It's somewhat rich; the part of the salmon she gave him is somewhat rich.

He looked at it. "Ahh, the salmon is a little moldy." He complained. "It's a little moldy."

His mother told him, "A little mold won't hurt you. Go ahead and eat it."

Just then someone called out from the beach.

"Aak'wtaatseen! You have a seagull in your snare!"

He forgot about the piece of dried salmon and started to run. When he went out in the water, the seagull began to pull the whole thing out. It came loose from the rocks and kept on going and pretty soon the water was up above his waistline. He disappeared.

The father ran down, got in the water. The water was clear. There was no sign of Aak'wtaatseen. There were just dog salmon swimming around. No one knew what happened to Aak'wtaatseen.

According to the story, the people of the salmon captured him. The salmon people took him way out to the ocean, way out on the sea; took him to the place where the young salmon go in the fall of the year after they leave the salmon river. He stayed out there for about three or four years among the salmon people.

There was a time he was so very lonesome, he could