



By: Robert Zuboff
Retold & Rewritten by: Kingeisti, David G. Katzeek

Introduction

This story was told by the late Robert Zuboff of the Deisheetaan, Beaver/Raven family. It is a story that belongs to the L'uknax.ádi, Coho/Raven family.

The story takes place in the Yakutat area. The time is before the great flood.

The primary heart and spirit of the story has not been changed, but it has been translated into an English translation and within the spirit of the story.

Story

Long, long ago raven was flying over the earth as he always has since time immemorial. He noticed that way out on the ocean there were seagulls and sea birds flying around in one particular place on the ocean.

Being curious, as he always is, he decided to fly out to where the seagulls and sea birds were all flying and hovering about. *There has to be food there* he thought. *These fellow creatures don't fly around just for the fun of it, I'll go and check it out*, he thought and off he went.

When he arrived, he found a big house floating on the ocean and he saw people taking fish out of this house for their own use. Raven went around asking "why is it that these people get to have this salmon?" The response from other birds was that "some of them did not know" and then one bird said "it is because these people are wealthy and they are the only ones that have the boats and tools to harvest the salmon; the other people don't have these tools."

There were all kinds of fish in the house. There was needlefish (took), eulachon (saak), cutthroat (x'éit aa), Dolly Varden (x' wáat'), Steelhead (aashát), King



salmon (t'á), Humpy (cháas'), Sockeye (gaat), Chum (téel'), and Coho (l'ook). "What a house! What a house!" he cawed out. Raven thought, *how nice it will be if all the people of the land (Tlingit aani kwaaní) could have this fish as well.* He meditated and thought about how he could bring the salmon house to shore where the people lived.

Raven thought about how he might be able to bring in the house with the fish in it. He thought and thought about it and came upon a solution, which was to pull the house to the shore. But how was he to do this? He went to the communities on the shore and asked around. "Can you hear him?" (I yá ax ágé?) Someone told him about an old man that might have what he was looking for.

He went to visit the elderly man and found that he had a very intriguing object. It was in the form of an octopus (náakw) tentacle. As soon as he laid his eyes on it, he wanted it. He asked the man if he could borrow it, but the man was reluctant. Raven considered how he might be able to get the object. He thought about it and thought about it until it dawned on him how he might obtain the object that the man had. He thought *I'll trade him with my special out the ordinary bow and arrow I have.*

He went to the old man and talked to him with kind and complimentary words. He said "I probably have something that you might want because it is a one of kind hunting weapon on earth."

"Do you see that mountain goat (jánwu) on the face of the cliff (gíl') way up there?"

"Yes," the old man said.

"I can shoot that mountain goat from right here without having to climb up there to hunt it. Do you want to see if what I am telling you is the truth asked raven?"

"Yes," the old man said.

Raven put the arrow (tláak) on the string and pulled back on the bow (sáks) and aimed it at the mountain goat. He let it go flying toward the mountain goat. The



old man did not know that raven had asked his partner, the magpie (ts'eegéeni), to help him with the arrow to fly it up to the mountain goat and stab it with the arrow, so the mountain goat would die.

His partner is fast and he grabbed the arrow as soon as it was shot toward the mountain goat. He flew and flew and just when he was getting tired he came upon the mountain goat and stabbed it. It startled the goat so it jumped and when it jumped, it jumped off the cliff and the mountain goat surely died as raven said it would.

The old man was impressed. He said "okay, I'll trade you!" Raven was so happy everyone could hear him yelling (cawing) at the end of the village. "What a prize" he was yelling and cawing like he won the greatest battle he had ever fought.

Raven then went out to the salmon house and hooked the tentacle to the house and began to pull the house ashore. He sat on the beach and where he sat; his footprints are there to this very day. He sang a song as the house was being pulled ashore. Today, if you listen carefully you can hear raven singing.

The L'uknax.ádi (Coho family) sing this song. It is very powerful. This story belongs to the Coho family. Gunalchéesh.

The first fish out of the salmon house include the needlefish (took), eulachon (saak), cutthroat (x'éit aa), Dolly Varden (x'wáat'), Steelhead (aashát), King salmon (t'á), Humpy (cháas'), Sockeye (gaat), Chum (téel') and Coho (l'ook). This is how raven helped the people get the fish. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game can verify the manner in which the fish come to the streams. Tlingit people knew this from ancient times, times before European contact and long before the great pyramids of Egypt.

