

# Yookís'kookeik

## The Man Who Ordered the Tide

by Kingeisti  
David G. Katzeek  
2/13

### Introduction

This is a translation of the Tlingit version of the Man Who Ordered the Tide as told by the late Robert Zuboff and the late Susie James. The time is before the great flood. Since time immemorial and to this very day the nephew(s) were trained to take their maternal uncle's place in leadership. Training was the responsibility of the uncle, the grandparents and the parents. This is the story of an uncle who did the opposite.

This is an ancient story with a lot educational material almost in all disciplines of education. ***This introduces the gravitational pull by the moon and the sun which results in the rising of the tide and other astronomical phenomena.***

### The Story

At one time there was no tide. The tide did not flow until Yookís'kookeik made it flow. The man who ordered around the tide felt threatened by his sister's up and coming sons. He did not want anyone alive to take his place as the leader, so he began killing his nephews.

One day, in the wake of the man's wrathful campaign, the lady who was losing her sons was walking along a wooded trail and was in deep thought. She felt the dull ache of loss and helplessness. As she was walking along she heard a voice ask her, "My dear lady what are you in such deep sorrow about?" It was a creature called Láx', a blue heron.

The woman replied, "My brother is killing all my boys, this is why I am in such sorrow." The heron gave her instructions. He said, "Keep walking along this path and look for a small, smooth rock. Make sure it is small and that it is very smooth. Don't stop looking until you find it. You will know that it is the rock when you see it."

Rapt with grief but willing to try anything, she started looking for that small, smooth rock. She searched diligently. Investigating every rock she came across seemed daunting, but soon she was committed to the task. She eyed every rock in her path attentively only to be greeted with a big, coarse, and jagged rock every time. No small, smooth stone to award her efforts. She kept on looking.

Finally, she came upon it. As Láx' said she knew it was the one. It was tiny and as smooth as glass. It was such a beautiful stone, delicate by comparison to every rock before it. It was a treasure in her eyes and she thought it would almost be a waste to swallow it. She wanted to keep it but she remembered the heron's instructions. So she swallowed it! It did not take long until she was with child. This is how the Blue Heron became the father of the raven.

When the child was born it was a boy and the woman named him Yéil. She hid her son from her brother until he was about 12 or 16 years old. At this age the male child would be sent to his sister's brother or maternal uncle. Raven's mom said to him, "It is time for you to go to your uncle, introduce yourself, and ask him if there is anything you can do help him." Raven thought about it and said "Ok, I'll do that."

Raven went to his uncle and did as his mother had instructed. Raven's uncle told him, "Do you see my canoe over there? In the Lingít language it is called yaakw. Go to it and get into it and start hollowing it out." So raven took his uncle's xút'aa, (adze) and went to the canoe and did as his uncle told him to do. The canoe croaked and warped, slowly coming to life. When Raven started chopping it out, the canoe began to close in on him like jaws. Raven got angry and elbowed one of the sides, effortlessly breaking the canoe apart. The verb phrase is aawát'eey. He elbowed it!

When Raven went back to tell his uncle what happened his uncle asked, "Why have you come back so soon?" Upon hearing the answer, Raven's uncle became furious. He intended the canoe to be a trap. He was hoping that it would kill his nephew and not break apart from just one blow.

Raven said, "Is there anything else I can do to help you?" Flustered but certain his nephew wouldn't survive the next trial, his uncle replied, "Yes, there are two trees up there in the woods and I want you to take them down." Raven went into the woods and started to take the trees down. Hard little wood flints (ín) burst out of the trees like spikes but bounced off of Raven, harmless as spruce needles. Raven, unfazed, chopped the trees down and went to his uncle and said, "Ok uncle, I chopped them down." His uncle was furious. Again he was hoping his nephew would be killed.

Raven's uncle then sent his nephew to get a large octopus (náakw) from the sea. Raven went to where his uncle had instructed him to go. He ambled effortlessly across jagged black rocks, hardly distracted by the fierce freezing spray of breaking waves to the place he would find the octopus. Raven quickly reached the spot the octopus would be waiting and dove in without hesitation. They wrestled, struggling only briefly until the octopus submitted. When raven caught him (aa wagéx') he asked the octopus to do him a favor. "Could you

make yourself real small?" he asked. The octopus made himself small and Raven put the octopus on the top of his head. They walked into his uncle's house with him and Raven said, "Here I am with what you wanted." Raven took the octopus off his head and gave it to his uncle. As soon as his uncle took it, Raven said to the náakw make yourself as big as you can. The octopus began to grow quickly. It grew so fast it started to fill up the room with Yookís'kookeik. "Stop, stop, stop, stop!" yelled Raven's uncle. The whole room was filled up, but the octopus obeyed Raven's uncle and stopped.

Raven's uncle was fuming! "This nephew of mine is so clever!" he thought. In his desperation he decided to call the tide in to drown his nephew. He was not going to be treated like this and especially not if he was the one who was in charge. He did not want anyone to take his place.

Raven's uncle sent him down to the beach and told the tide to start coming in. It began to flow fast. The water surged up to the woods and since Raven had just as much power as his uncle, he told the tide to stop. The tide obeyed.

Raven saw a black sea duck on the water and he got it with his bow and arrow. He skinned it and brought the skin to his mother and put her in it. He put her in the water and told her that she would be alright. Just like Raven promised she bobbed harmlessly on the turbulent surf, safe within the duck's skin. Raven said, "I will fly to the heavens and hang on the stars until the tide begins to go out."

Raven told the tide to start flowing again and it did. He flew to highest heavens and hung there. No one knows how long he was there. He stayed there until the tide started to flow out. When he thought it was time to come back to earth, he let go of the heavens and began to fall to earth. No one knows how long it took him to fall to earth.

When he entered the earth's atmosphere he noticed that there was a plant called sú next to the bull kelp (geesh). He landed on it. He rested on it and almost instantly he heard something in the water near him. He saw that it was a sea otter (yaxwch') and spoke to it.

He asked, "Can you dive all the way to the bottom of the sea?" The otter said yes. "Are there rocks and sand at the bottom?" The otter said yes. "My most special friend can you help me and bring up some of the rocks and sand and give it to me?" asked Raven.

The otter dove (yindeiw gleetees) and quickly descended to the bottom of the sea. Raven was ecstatic when the otter returned with rocks and sand. He was so happy he began throwing the rocks out on the ocean and as the rocks fell they became the islands in Alaska. Raven flew from island to island, rock to rock.

When he got to a certain place, he threw out the sand and as they hit the water they became what is now known as the Aleutian Chain. The Alaska Peninsula is what it is more commonly known by. Raven also set the boundary for the tide. The tide goes out and comes in to this very day.

XXX