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NAWENDIWIN: The art of being related - Anishinaabeg Kinship-centred Governance and Family law (Nawendiwin) Casebook

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CASEBOOK



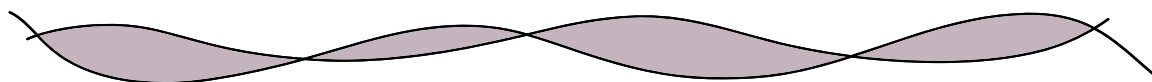
NAWENDIWIN: THE ART OF BEING RELATED

ANISHINAABEG KINSHIP-CENTRED GOVERNANCE & FAMILY LAW

A RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
NIIJKIWENDIDAA ANISHNAABEKWEWAG SERVICES CIRCLE
& THE INDIGENOUS LAW RESEARCH UNIT

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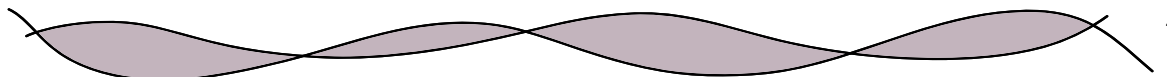
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INTRODUCTION



Every society's laws are rooted in its cultural, spiritual, social, and economic structures, and there are many different avenues through which law may be encountered, learned, and lived. However, as many of the structures that organize Indigenous societies are different than those of settler societies, learning Indigenous laws, particularly for those not raised within communities, can seem a daunting task.

One of the more accessible methods of legal education regarding laws that, historically, were not written in books is by responsibly engaging with oral traditions. Stories, narratives, and other oral histories and teachings can be deeply meaningful, relevant resources, and are a way through which to observe, identify, and analyze a society's deeply rooted principles, processes, and institutions of governance. These are the values, aspirations, and public commitments that give shape to that society's own unique **legal tradition**. While stories and oral histories have many functions (including education, entertainment, and creative expression), they may also stand the test of time as normative resources (that is, expressions or explorations of what should or should not be done in a situation). In this regard, stories within Indigenous societies have much in common with what happens in courts of law and judicial decisions in settler societies, where past records of similar cases (also known as precedents) are used to guide how decisions should be made in the present.

This Casebook, along with the Analysis Report, *Nawendiwin: The Art of Being Related*, are intended to help people explore critical legal issues surrounding kinship-centred governance in an Anishinaabeg/Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg legal tradition. Finding “cases” within a story (instances where reasoning, deliberation, and decision-making take place), and working with one or more “legal issues” (problems or questions) that a story engages with, is simply *one* way to engage with Indigenous law. It is not meant to impose any single or authoritative interpretation on a story, or on a legal order more broadly. It is also not meant to minimize the limitations and damage that may occur through translation or other means. Responsibly engaging with these resources—whether from inside or outside Anishinaabeg societies—requires us to be continually mindful of our own interpretive lenses, assumptions, and contexts for how we perceive, analyze, and seek to uphold law.



A NOTE ON STORY ANALYSIS

WHAT IS A CASE BRIEF?

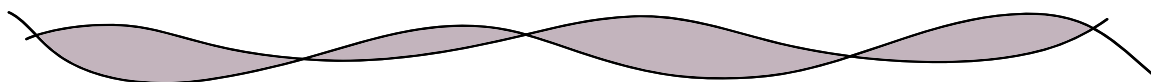
As Cree Elder Louis Bird said, stories are for thinking.¹ This selection of sixteen narratives from Anishinaabe oral traditions have been analyzed by researchers in the spirit of ongoing and responsible learning through Indigenous intellectual resources. These narratives (and many others) help us think—and develop *internal* perspectives—about how Anishinaabeg kinship-centred governance responds to situations of family conflict, vulnerability, and harm. The Casebook includes the text of each narrative, along with “case briefs” that provide a summary of how researchers have engaged with the stories as tools for learning. These briefs are never definitive ‘answers,’ but can provide starting points for further discussion, analysis, and constructive questioning, all of which are necessary to the continued revitalization of Indigenous law.

A case brief is a method used in law schools to teach students how to analyze decisions made by judges. This approach offers a useful tool for learning to see the legal principles and reasoning in those decisions. Using this same method for teachings and oral narratives helps researchers rigorously engage with them as resources for learning to see and understand the law within an Indigenous legal tradition.² As represented here, case briefs commonly have five sections: (1) Legal Issue(s); (2) Relevant Facts; (3) Decision(s); (4) Reasons; and (5) Brackets/Questions.

First, for the **legal issue**, we ask what the relevant human questions or problems a narrative is addressing. Just as in Canadian court cases, there can be many legal issues addressed within a single narrative. Thus, having an overall research question helps to focus our analysis on the problem that is most relevant to the area of law that we are interested in understanding. For this Project, researchers asked each narrative questions about kin-centred governance. Importantly, while a narrative may not appear to deal with human issues on its surface (for example, if the characters or events are animal or supernatural, for example), stories, as teaching tools and significant records passed down through generations within a

¹ Louis Bird as cited in Val Napoleon in UVic Indigenous Law Research Unit ILRU, “Indigenous Law: an introduction” (14 September 2015) at 00h:05m:043s, online (video): Youtube <<https://youtu.be/7uNgq7raxk4?t=343>> [Accessed 31 October 2020] [transcribed by author]; See also Louis Bird, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind: Omushkego Stories, Lives, and Dreams*, ed by Susan Elaine Gray (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007) at xiv-xv.

² This approach is more comprehensively outlined in Hadley Friedland and Val Napoleon, *Gathering the Threads: Developing a Methodology for Researching and Rebuilding Indigenous Legal Traditions* (2015-2016 1:1 Lakehead L.J) at 21-26.



given society, are fundamentally concerned with human problems and decisions. This is why we ask them what they are teaching us today.

Next, researchers briefly outline the **relevant facts** that are important to the issue that has been identified. Not every detail may be relevant to a particular issue, so this step helps to highlight which ones are necessary to understanding how a legal issue is dealt with in the narrative.

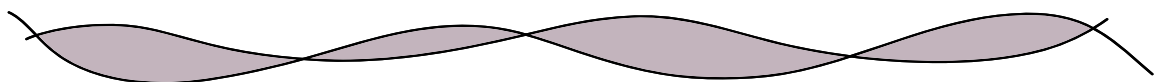
The third step identifies the **decision(s)** that are taken to address the issue(s). Sometimes, these decisions resolve the problem. Alternatively, they may show how *not* to resolve a problem. Decisions can be thought of as rulings on the legal issue.

Fourth (and perhaps most importantly), the case brief explores the **reasons** for why a particular decision or action was taken. This is a crucial step for drawing out the explanations for approaches and outcomes to problems within a particular society and context. The principles behind reasons and reasoning processes provide the basis for understanding and upholding decisions as legitimate (or not), and for applying this learning (what a court may think of as a case's precedent) to future problems. The reasoning behind a decision may be explicitly stated in the narrative itself, or it may be unstated, identified through a researcher's inferences or knowledge learned from other sources. We try to make the sources of our inferences clear.

Finally, there are often aspects of a narrative that are beyond a researcher's ability to understand, but which may be important to the legal issue or context. These are the questions and curiosities that researchers note in the **bracket/questions** section of a case brief. This makes uncertainties visible, and often provides important points for further exploration with other narratives or knowledgeable people within the legal tradition.

Case briefs are never definitive 'answers.' They do, however, provide starting points for further discussion, analysis, and constructive questioning. All of these are necessary for the continued revitalization of Indigenous law. Creating and cross-referencing case briefs from many narratives within an oral tradition lets researchers (who are often outsiders) start to see patterns of reasoning and resolution, and principle and process. As set out in the Analysis Report, synthesizing the combined knowledge of narratives that have been organized and analyzed around a research topic helps develop frameworks of legal information, which are deepened through conversation with community members. While, of course, never complete or comprehensive, this approach is meant to articulate the pillars of lawfulness *within* a particular society, the legal authorities, institutions, expectations, and responsibilities that characterize and cohere that society's governance, including ways of contending with and resolving problems. These are essentially internal qualities, as continually interpreted, practiced, and upheld by self-determining peoples.

Finally, because of their general importance to Anishinaabeg legal discernment and decision-making, researchers have bolded instances where they see the Seven Kokum/Mishomis ("Grandmother/father") Teachings arising in the narratives.



INDEX OF LEGAL THEMES

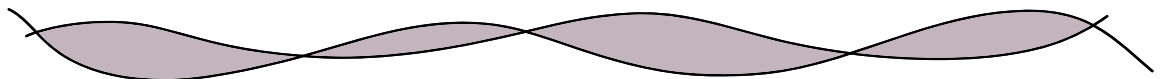
Learning from narratives as legal resources involves, as a first step, identifying the legal issues that are relevant to a particular research question. What follows is a thematic index to some of the issues that researchers identified in the narratives for questions relating to Anishinaabeg/Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg laws of kinship-centred governance, including responses to vulnerability, conflict, and harm. This index—by no means exhaustive—provides an additional way for people to engage with and apply the knowledge in these narratives to current issues or related research. Two major headings organize the themes according to their focus on primary caregiving or extended kinship/community relationships. Of course, these categories are closely connected and mutually reinforcing; lessons and laws regarding primary caregiving relationships can often be applied to extended kinship/community issues, and vice-versa. Also, as the same story often provides insights into multiple questions of kinship-centred governance, most are cross-referenced across headings.

THEME: PRIMARY CAREGIVING ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RESPONSES

- **(Re)Building Kinship Relations**
 - *Responding to new or returning family members*
 - The Indian Who Became a Thunderbird
 - Weegibance Saves her People
 - The Dog's Children
 - *Responding to breakdowns or breaches of kinship relations*
 - Nenebojo and his younger brother
 - The Dog's Children
- **Changes in Kinship Relations**
 - *Responding to loss or change of caregiving/kinship roles*
 - Family Duty
 - Robin



- The father who was jealous of his youngest son
 - She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design
- **Meeting Needs**
- *Responding to youth assertions of self-determination*
 - Robin
 - She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery
 - Family Duty
 - *Responding to material needs within or between families*
 - Nenebojo and his younger brother
 - Why Some Trees Keep Their Leaves When Others Do Not
- **Responding to Vulnerabilities, Conflicts, and Harms within Families**
- *Responding to abuse or misuse of power/caregiving authority*
 - The Father who was Jealous of his Youngest Son
 - Robin
 - *Responding to vulnerabilities in caregiving relationships*
 - Family Duty
 - *Responding to a child's wrongdoing or difficult choices*
 - She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design
 - Story of Redfeather
 - *Responding to a sibling/family member's harmful or difficult choices*
 - The Dog's Children
 - Nenebojo and his Younger Brother
- **Authority and Decision-Making Processes**
- *Making decisions about conflict or harm within families*
 - The Indian Who Became a Thunderbird
 - The Father who was Jealous of his Youngest Son
 - Nenebojo and his Younger Brother
 - *Making decisions as caregivers/older relations with/for children/youth*
 - Story of Redfeather
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery
 - She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design
 - Robin
 - The Father who was Jealous of his Youngest Son



THEME: EXTENDED KINSHIP AND COMMUNITY ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND RESPONSES

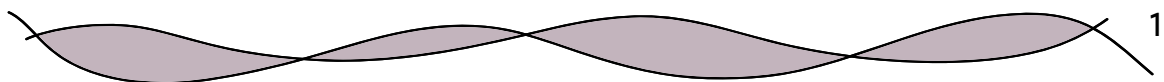
- **Caring for Children**
 - *Supporting child/youth well-being within communities*
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery
 - She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design
 - Nenebojo and his Younger Brother
 - Story of Redfeather
 - Four Warriors Find Naanabozho

- **Community Responses to Vulnerabilities, Conflicts, and Harms**
 - *Responding to a child's wrongdoing*
 - Story of Redfeather
 - *Responding to vulnerability or abuse in caregiving relationships*
 - The Bachelor
 - *Responding to community conflict*
 - The Baagaataa'awa Game that Changed Everything

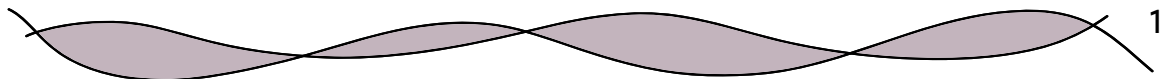
- **Building and Maintaining Community/Extended Kinship Relations**
 - *Responding to new or returning members*
 - The Star People Are Always Watching
 - The Indian Who Became a Thunderbird
 - Weegibance Saves her People
 - The Dog's Children

- **Meeting Needs**
 - *Responding to individual needs (by community/extended kinship)*
 - The Breadmaker
 - Why Some Trees Keep Their Leaves When Others Do Not
 - Four Warriors Find Naanabozho
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery
 - *Responding to community/extended kinship needs (by individuals)*
 - Weegibance Saves her People
 - Four Warriors Find Naanabozho
 - The Baagaataa'awa Game that Changed Everything
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery

- **Authority and Decision-Making Processes**
 - *The roles of Elders in community processes*
 - The Baagaataa'awa Game that Changed Everything



- Weegibance Saves her People
 - The Star People Are Always Watching
 - Four Warriors Find Naanabozho
- *The roles of children/youth in community processes*
 - Four Warriors Find Naanabozho
 - The Baagaataa'awa Game that Changed Everything
 - Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery





ANISHINAABEG NARRATIVES OF KIN-CENTRED GOVERNANCE



KWEZENS MAKES A LOVELY DISCOVERY

This story is adapted from Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 1-25, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson states in a footnote to this story:

“It is a traditional practice to begin by talking about how I learned this story and how I relate to it. This is a traditional Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg story that I learned from Washkigaamagki (Curve Lake First Nation) Elder Gidigaa Migizi (Doug Williams). This is my own re-telling of it, and it is one of the ways I tell it in March, when my family and I are in the sugar bush, making maple syrup. I have chosen to gender the main character as a girl because I identify as a women, but the story can be and should be told using all genders. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg refers to Mississauga Ojibwe people, and our territory is the north shore of Lake Huron in what is now known as Ontario, Canada. We are part of the larger Anishinaabeg nation.”³

In another footnote (footnote 13 at page 5), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson states:

“A similar version of this story is published in (Simpson, 2013). A different version of this story is told by a non-Native author (Cook, 1999). There are several other maple sugar origin stories, see the title story from *The Gift Is in the Making* (Simpson, 2013) and Corbiere (2011).”⁴

Kwezens⁵ is out walking in the bush one day

³ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 2, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

⁴ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 5 n 13, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

⁵ “Kwezens literally means ‘little woman’ and is used to mean girl.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 3, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.



It is Ziigwan⁶
the lake is opening up
the goon was finally melting
she's feeling that first warmth of spring on her cheeks
"Nigitchi nendam, she is thinking, "I'm happy".

Then that Kwezens who is out walking
collecting firewood for her Doodoom⁷
decides to sit under Ninaatigoog
maybe just stretch out
maybe just have a little rest
maybe gather firewood a little later
"Owah, Ngitchi nendam nongom.
I'm feeling happy today", says that Kwezens.

And while that Kwezens
is lying down, and looking up
she sees Ajidamoo⁸ up in the tree
"Bozhoo Ajidamoo! I hope you had a good winter"
"I hope you had enough food cached."
But Ajidamoo doesn't look up because she's already busy.
She's not collecting nuts.
Gawiin.⁹

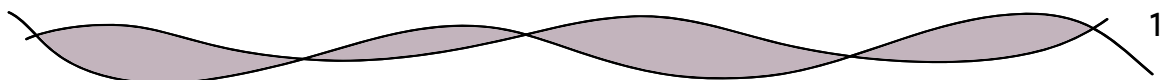
She's not building her nest
Gawiin, not yet.
She's not looking after any young.

⁶ "Ziigwan is the first part of spring when the ice is breaking up and the snow is melting." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery" in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 4, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

⁷ "Doodoom is an older Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg word that children use to for their mothers. It means 'my breastfeeder'. I learned this word from Doug Williams." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery" in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 5, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

⁸ "Ajidamoo is a red squirrel." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery" in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 6, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

⁹ "Gaawiin means no." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery" in "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 2 n 7, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.



Gawiin, too early.
She's just nibbling on the bark, and then doing some sucking.

Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.

Kwezens is feeling a little curious.
So she does it too, on one of the low branches.

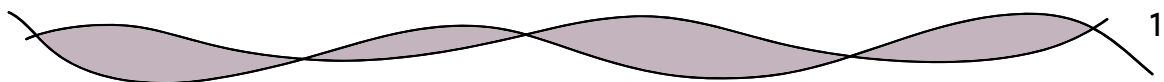
Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.
Nibble, nibble, suck.

MMMMMMMMmmmmmm.
This stuff tastes good.
It's real, sweet water.
MMMMmmmmmmmmmm.

Then Kwezens gets thinking
and she makes a hole in that tree
and she makes a little slide for
that sweet water to run down
she makes a quick little container
out of birch bark, and
she collects that sweet water
and she takes that sweet water home
to show his mama.

That doodoom is excited and she has three hundred questions:

“Ah Kwezens, what is this?”
“Where did you find it?”
“Which tree?”
“Who taught you how to make it?”



“Did you put semaa¹⁰?”
“Did you say miigwech¹¹?”
“How fast is it dripping?”
“Does it happen all day?”
“Does it happen all night?”
“Where’s the firewood?”

Kwezens tells her doodoom the story,
She believes every word
because she is her Kwezens
and they love each other very much.
“Let’s cook the meat in it tonight,
it will be lovely sweet”
“Nahow.”
“Nahow.”

So they cooked that meat in that sweet water
it was lovely sweet
it was extra lovely sweet
it was even sweeter than just that sweet water.

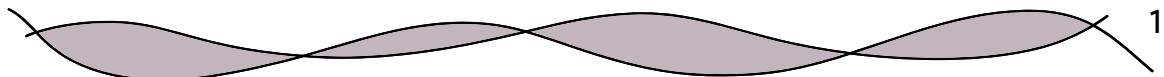
The next day, Kwezens takes her mama
to that tree and her mama brings Nokomis
and Nokomis brings all the Aunties, and
there is a very big crowd of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabekwewag¹²
and there is a very big lot of pressure
Kwezens tells about Ajidamoo
Kwezens does the nibble nibble suck part.

At first there are technical difficulties
and none of it works.
but Mama rubs Kwezens back
she tells Kwezens that she believes her anyway

¹⁰ “Semaa is tobacco.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 4 n 8, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

¹¹ “Miigwech means thanks.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 5 n 9, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

¹² “Nishnaabekwewag means Ojibwe women.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 5 n 10, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.



they talk about lots of variable like heat and temperature and time
then Giizis comes out and warms everything up
and soon its drip
drip

drip

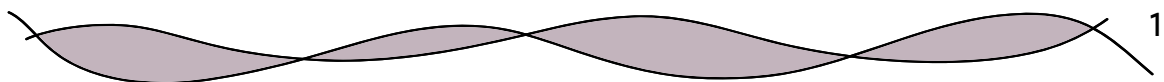
drip

those Aunties go crazy
Saasaakwe!¹³
dancing around
hugging a bit too tight
high kicking
and high fiving
until they take it back home
boil it up
boil it down
into sweet, sweet sugar.

Ever since, every Ziigwan
those Michi Saagiig Nishnaabekwewag
collect that sweet water
and boil it up
and boil it down
into that sweet, sweet sugar
all thanks to Kwezens and her lovely discovery,
and to Ajidamoo and her precious teaching
and to Ninaatigoog¹⁴ and their boundless sharing.

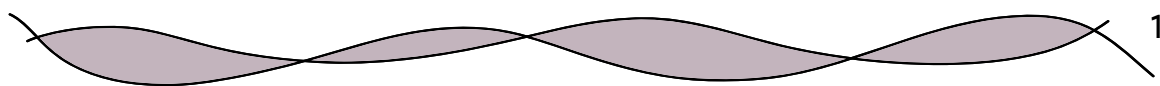
¹³ “A saasaakwe is a loud shout or vocalization of approval used to call in or acknowledge the spirits.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 5 n 11, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

¹⁴ “Ninaatigoog are maple trees.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Kwezens Makes a Lovely Discovery” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” (2014) 3:3 *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 at 5 n 12, online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <<https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22170/17985>>.

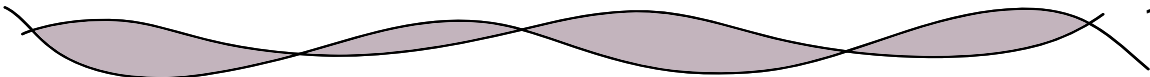


CASE BRIEF

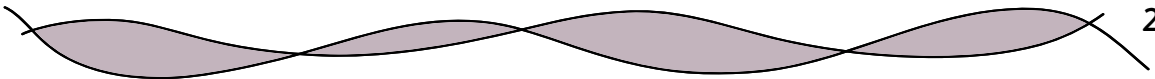
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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are a community’s responsibilities in raising a child? |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kwezens is out collecting firewood for her Doodoom (mother). She decides to rest in the warm spring sun. • Kwezens notices a squirrel nibbling and sucking at the bark of a maple tree. She imitates the squirrel and discovers the sweet sap being released by Ninaatigoog (maple tree). |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kwezens collects the sweet water from the tree and takes it home to her mom. • Doodoom asks many questions about the discovery and Kwezens’ response to the tree’s gift/teaching. • Mom and Kwezens return to the tree with Nokomis, who brings Aunties. A big crowd gathers. • Kwezaes repeats what she saw Ajidamoo doing. When it does not work, her mom comforts and reassures her. They discuss “lots of variables like heat and temperature and time.” Then Giizis (sun) comes out and sap starts flowing. They celebrate! |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Kwezens’ freedom-within-service (to relax, reflect, observe) allowed her to learn from squirrel/Ajidamoo and discover maple syrup. • Said: Kwezens’ Doodoom believes “every word because she is her Kwezens and they love each other very much.” • Unsaid: Children deserve and benefit from the trust (as expressions of respect) of their older kin. This in turn nurtures honesty and courage. <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story’s decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Doodoom had taught Kwezens about how to honour gifts/teachings (putting semaa (tobacco); saying miigwech). These are legal responsibilities, and older kin/caregivers have the duty of teaching these protocols to younger kin. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, as beings closer to the spirit world, are more attuned to the non-human world’s teachings. Older kin recognize and respect this wisdom. <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children helping older kin (for example, Kwezens collecting firewood for her mom/Doodoom) occurs within a context of freedom and non-compulsion (in other words, happiness is just as important as firewood!). • Parents/caregivers do not necessarily have to be physically present to teach their children, but have the responsibility to facilitate preparation and reflection (for example, Doodoom has 300 questions). • Believing/being believed is a right and responsibility that is nurtured within kinship relations. For example, Doodoom expects and grants honesty. This is a baseline of her relationship with Kwezens: “she believes every word because she is her Kwezens and they love each other very much.” • Sharing new knowledge and resources within and through kinship networks: daughter to mom, to grandma, to aunts, to all, the non-human world. • The responsibility to engage in certain procedures if you receive teachings/gifts/resources from the non-human world and other families, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Putting down semaa; ○ Expressing miigwech; and ○ Following procedural steps for bringing new information/techniques/resources into families, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observation; ▪ Sharing within kin networks, starting with closest person (whoever provides the most loving context for receiving it) first. Relatives may also share with others. ▪ Patience, as new discoveries have many variables (including those out of our control!); ▪ Protection (against disappointment or judgment), which is provided by loving kin; and ▪ Celebration and ongoing responsible use. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <p>1. Kwezens made this “lovely discovery,” but did not do it alone. How does this story make you think about how relations (with family, wider community, and nature/other-than-humans) help and support individual efforts? How do</p> |



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| | <p>you see these interactions being lived—or being challenged—in communities today?</p> <p>2. Is <i>how</i> Kwezens (and others) acted just as important as <i>what</i> Kwezens (and others) discovered? What might this help us understand about Anishinaabeg law (both processes and outcomes)?</p> |
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THE INDIAN WHO BECAME A THUNDERBIRD

This version adapted from Norval Morrisseau, "The Indian that Became a Thunderbird," *Legends of my People, the Great Ojibway*, Selwyn Dewdney, ed (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd, 1977) 6 at 6-12.

Once in ancient times there lived seven North American Indian brothers. According to this legend these seven brothers had never seen a woman before. How each was born without both parents this legend does not mention. One day the youngest of the seven whose name was Wahbi Ahmik, White Beaver, went hunting in the great forest. There he met Nimkey Banasik, Thunderbird Woman. White Beaver was not afraid for he was glad to see such a beautiful woman. The young warrior took his lady fair to his wigwam where they lived together as man and wife and were very happy. All his brothers liked her except Ahsin, Stone, the oldest brother, who hated her but tried not to show his feelings. One day White Beaver went hunting and was very happy thinking of all the blessings he was given. It was on this day that Ahsin's hate became too much for him to bear.

When White Beaver returned from the hunt he discovered bloodstains around the campfire and near his wigwam. He then rushed into his tent and, not seeing his woman Nimkey Banasik anywhere, his anger grew against his brother Stone because now White Beaver knew that it must have been Stone who hated his wife so much that he killed her.

White Beaver rushed to the tent of Ahsin and said, "I know you hated her, but what wrong did she do to you? It must indeed have been a great wrong. Tell me, Ahsin, what have you done, for I see her blood on the ground leading into the forest?"

Ahsin was not afraid of his brother's anger and replied, "You brought this woman Nimkey Banasik to your wigwam and to my presence when I hate the sight of a woman. I hated her the first time I saw her. We were all happy together before she came, so I planned to get rid of her for good. When you left this morning I saw Nimkey Banasik by the fireside preparing moose meat and cooking for you. I got my sharpest arrow and placed it in my bow. The arrow found its mark in the hip of this woman I hated. After I shot the arrow she jumped up and half ran into the forest, and loud noises of thunder were heard up in the heavens. I was afraid of the thunder and I was afraid to follow her to make sure I had killed her."

Wahbi Ahmik asked Stone, Ahsin, "Where were my other brothers at the time this took place and why did they not stop you from doing what you did?"

Stone answered, "I sent them away. As you see, none have returned yet."



“Now my brother Stone,” replied White Beaver, “I am indeed mad enough to kill you, even if you are my blood brother. You are a very foolish man and very evil. Even though I am mad at you, still in a way I am sorry for you. My brother Stone, tell me, did it ever come to your mind what or who Nimkey Banasik was? Could you not think what her name meant—Great Thunderbird Woman? I had meant to tell you but I did not do so right away because I knew you did not like her. This woman could have been the one to boost future generations, if her blood and ours had been mixed together by means of a child. For this woman was a thunderbird in human form. Nimkey Banasik had six sisters. With them we could have founded a great civilization. Now it is too late. And from this day forward Indians to come, from generation to generation, will know that it was you who stopped that progress. But there will be Indians coming from the east whose women our brothers will marry. As for me, I am leaving, never to return until I find this woman, for I shall follow her. I have a feeling that she is still alive, for she had a lot of power.”

Then White Beaver followed the trail that led into the forest, over valleys and mountains and far into the great forest, until he reached a huge mountain whose top reached over the very clouds and beyond. He started to climb until the earth could not be seen any more, for now he had reached the very top. There on a blanket of clouds stood a great majestic wigwam that shot forth thunder and lightning bolts. From the wigwam was heard the laughter of many women. All at once it stopped, for his presence was felt. As the wigwam flap opened, there stood Nimkey Banasik looking beautiful as ever, with no sign of blood or of the arrow. She said, “Why did you follow me?”

“I came because you are my life.”

Then the woman said, “Come forward. We will give you power to walk on the clouds. Come inside, I want you to meet my parents.”

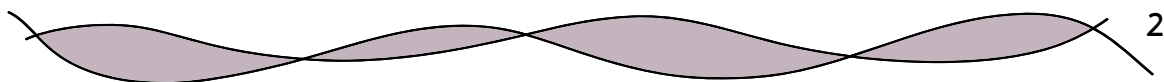
Inside the wigwam were seated two old thunderbirds in human form. Each looked full of power and wisdom. In their eyes he saw light flashing off and on. The Indian was very hungry.

The old man said, “What shall we give this Indian? I know he will not eat as we do, for we are of a different nature and we cannot keep him in heaven too long.”

So the Indian was asked by the thunderbird sister what he would eat. The Indian said, “I eat moose and deer.”

“We will try to obtain some for you.”

A big roar of thunder was heard. From the human form the thunderbirds changed into their natural state and flew away. About half an hour later they brought back a big horned snake with two heads and three tails. It was offered to Wahbi Ahmik to eat, but he was unable to do so. Even looking at it made him sick. But each morning he grew more hungry. Again he was asked if he would like something to eat. Two more trips were made but proved unsuccessful. The second time he was offered a snake sturgeon, the third a great big cat



demigod. He refused all, as White Beaver could not eat in the same manner as the thunderbirds.

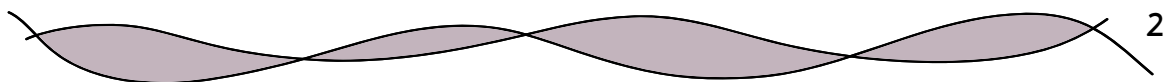
Finally the old woman said to her older daughter, “I am aged in wisdom. I have great knowledge. I know you like this human who is an Indian. As you see, even if he were to be one of us he could not eat as we do. Take him to your great medicine thunderbird uncle, known as Southern Medicine Thunderbird, who lives in the south. Among the thunderbirds there I am sure he will have medicine for this Indian.”

White Beaver was laid in a big blanket of cloud that reminded him of a rabbit-skin blanket and he was taken in that manner to the far south. This blanket also covered him, so that he should not look. Before leaving there was a great flash and White Beaver heard thunder and then felt the cloud moving. After some time everything stopped and he was told to get up. As he looked around a big medicine lodge was seen in the middle of a great cloud. Below, on the second layer of clouds, were seen many lodges and wigwams of thunderbirds of many different kinds, who all had human forms. As they entered the medicine lodge Nimkey Banasik spoke to her uncle and said, “My mother, your sister, sent us to try to give medicine to this Indian so that he may eat as we do and if possible become one of us.”

For a while the medicine thunderbird stood in silence, then said, “All right, let it be known to this Indian that if he will take the medicine I shall give he will never return to earth but will become a thunderbird, to live up in the heavens for ever.” Then the medicine thunderbird took out two small medicine eggs coloured light blue, mixed them together in a small pot and advised Ahmik to drink the first drink.

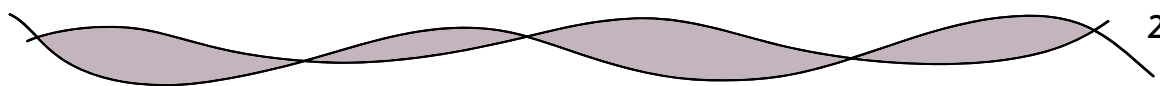
When White Beaver took it he felt that some power had entered him, and as he looked at his feet he noticed they were those of a thunderbird. At the next drink, the whole amount, he changed into a thunderbird. His human form, the wigwams, the medicine lodge, all had disappeared. Everyone was now a thunderbird. So, being hungry, he flew onward to the home of the female thunderbirds and feasted on the very things he could not eat some short time ago.

But the Indians that lived below remembered this Indian who became a thunderbird. Ahsin's disgrace was known, and the women of the people who came from the east married some of the brothers, and so on from generation to generation until this modern era. This legend is respected among my people. Ojibway belief states that this thunderbird is still heard up in the great heavens and I myself have heard it twice in my lifetime.



CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to new kinship relations |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In ancient times, there were seven brothers who lived together, but had never seen a woman. The youngest, Wahbi Ahmik (White Beaver), meets Nimkey Banasik (Thunderbird Woman). He invites her home and they live together as husband and wife. • The oldest brother, Ahsin (Stone), hates her. When Wahbi Ahmik is out hunting, Ahsin sends the other brothers away and shoots Nimkey Banasik in the hip. She flees to the forest. • Wahbi Ahmik follows the trail Nimkey Banasik leaves, and finally reaches a great wigwam on the top of a high mountain. “From the wigwam was heard the laughter of many women.” |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wahbi Ahmik questions Ahsin about what happened. Ahsin tells him exactly what he did and why he did it. He blames Wahbi Ahmik for disrupting the family (“you brought this woman . . . to my presence when I hate the sight of a woman . . . We were all happy together before she came, so I planned to get rid of her for good”). • Wahbi Ahmik expresses his anger but also pity for his brother for what he has done: “this woman could have been the one to boost future generations. . . .” • Nimkey Banasik asks Wahbi Ahmik why he followed her, and introduces her to her Thunderbird parents. They welcome and attempt to feed him, but he cannot eat thunderbird food. • Nimkey Banasik’s mother acknowledges her daughter’s love for Wahbi Ahmik, and advises that they should go to her great uncle Southern Medicine Thunderbird for medicine. • Wahbi Ahmik is told that if he takes the medicine he will become a thunderbird and never return to earth. He drinks the medicine, becomes a thunderbird, and eats. • Both Wahbi Ahmik and Ahsin are still remembered among the Anishinaabeg. |



REASONS

What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?

- Said: Ahsin's hatred was no secret.
- Unsaid: While Ahsin was solely responsible for harming Nimkey Banasik and severing the possibility of close kinship relations between the Anishinaabeg and thunderbirds, Wahbi Ahmik and his other brothers could have done more to recognize and respond to the dangerous situation that Nimkey Banasik came into.
- Said: Ahsin's shameful action is remembered as stopping the progress of the great civilization (strengthened kinship relations) that may have resulted from marriages between the brothers and the thunderbird sisters.
- Unsaid: Trying to protect/defend existing kin relations (here, the seven brothers living alone) can have the effect of diminishing or severing even those existing relations (Ahsin (and the other brothers) lose their relationship with Wahbi Ahmik as well as Nimkey Banasik).
- Unsaid: Wahbi Ahmik made an informed choice to become a thunderbird. While this decision means leaving his former life/relations, it also retains some (much more distant) connections between the Anishinaabeg and thunderbird communities.

What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?

- Unsaid: Ahsin hated Nimkey Banasik out of his ignorance/prejudice/resistance to change (there is no reason in the story other than that the brothers had never known women, and that he had been happy with the way things were before Nimkey Banasik arrived).
- Inter-societal kinship relations have the potential to strengthen families/communities, but success is not guaranteed. The early identification of vulnerabilities or risks (such as Ahsin's negative feelings, or Wahbi Ahmik's inability to eat), and addressing these COLLABORATIVELY allows for new family members to be integrated in ways that respect and respond to their own and their (new) community's needs.

What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?

- Between existing kin relations: This story raises the question of whether we have a responsibility to be aware of or respond to the emotions of those we live with. Would this



have helped resolve the situation where, as Ahmik's happiness grew, his brother's hate increased?

- Between relations that share space and resources: To respond to signs of discord early (For example, Ahmik knew about his brother's hatred, yet still left Nimkey Banasik vulnerable)
- Between women: Women nurture spaces of protection and care. For example, Nimkey Banasik flees from violence and goes to her former home for spiritual and physical refuge (all four planes/quadrants of existence: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual); The story states, "from the wigwam was heard the laughter of many women"
- Honesty, especially in response to requests for information and about intentions, is featured here even in a case of wrongdoing (specifically, Ahsin harming Nimkey Banasik)
- Rights and responsibilities in the formation of kin relations (especially in wider families): There are two approaches to kin formation in this story (one for Nimkey Banasik; one for Wahbi Ahmik). The latter is successful. This success is based on the welcome, support, and involvement of wider kin (the thunderbird parents and uncle).
- Information supports these essential aspects of kinship formation:
 - Ahmik should have told his brother(s) about Nimkey Banasik's importance (for example, by doing what he could to ensure that they had all the information about her distinctiveness) when he brought her into the family.
 - Ahmik should have told Nimkey Banasik about Ahsin's animosity.
 - Nimkey Banasik introduced Ahmik to her family and alerted them to his distinctive needs, including a commitment for them to meet his needs. The thunderbird family makes repeated (increasingly interventionist) attempts to nurture Ahmik. Wider kin/experts are eventually brought in to assist.
 - Ahmik has the right to decide how to proceed with the 'full transition' to a new kinship network that would irrevocably change his former life and kin connections (these are maintained in some form: "the Indians that lived below remembered this Indian who became a thunderbird").



BRACKETS &
QUESTIONS FOR
REFLECTION

1. In the story, Wahbi Ahmik becomes a Thunderbird, which seems necessary to sustain himself and his marriage. What do you think about this? Could Wahbi Ahmik and the Thunderbirds have found a way to live together without requiring him to completely change himself? Or, was the transformation necessary for Anishinaabeg to learn and live this story's lessons? What role do families and communities play in resolving the tensions between new and existing relationships?
2. Why did Ahsin have the power to send his brothers away and cause harm to Nimkey Banasik? Was this because he was the oldest brother? Is authority based on being the eldest in a family common in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg families? What are some of the ways that authority in kinship relationships is balanced or kept accountable?
3. Do you think the way Wahbi Ahmik responded to Ahsin's violence was appropriate? If he had not been so alone (raised without parents, other genders, a wider community, etc.), how might this situation have been different? (Nimkey Banasik's family, for example, had many other members and resources to draw on).



THE BREADMAKER, “JUST A CRUST OF BREAD”

This version adapted from Basil Johnston, “The Breadmaker” in *The Gift of the Stars: Anungook gauh meenikooying* (Ontario: Kegdonce Press, 2010) 48 at 48-50.

In the introduction of the book, Johnston states:

“Only selfishness, the first and well-spring of all human ill will and deeds and shortcomings will hold back some men and women from sharing their talents with their brothers and sisters, kin and neighbours. For what good is sweetness of voice if there is no one to hear it, or beauty of form if there is no one to behold it. With this understanding of human nature in mind, our ancestors sought to instill selflessness in the hearts and minds of their people.”¹⁵

The baker was baking bread. Already she had baked 10 loaves. They were nice brown, fat loaves that smelled so good that they made her hungry. The thought that they would make a fine meal that evening and for many thereafter made her happy. She hummed a little song as she gave a crust to her dog. The dog growled.

The old woman looked up to see who her dog was growling at. On the far side of the meadow she saw a man walking toward her. He was walking very slowly. She kept her eyes on him. Before too long, the old woman recognized the old man. She gasped, “Oh Heavens. It’s him, old Nana’b’oozoo! That good for nothing beggar; the laziest of men. All he does is go around telling hard luck stories, looking for a handout. Well!” the woman huffed, “He’s not getting a free meal from me! He can work for his meals like other people.”

The old woman didn’t waste another word. She hid her loaves in her weegwaum. But she kept a ball of dough the size of her fist on a flat stone next to the fireplace. Then she dusted off her dress.

Presently, Nana’b’oozoo came up to the old woman’s weegwaym. “My lucky day,” he said, “to have come while you’re baking bread. Perhaps you might be kind enough to spare me a bun or a crust of bread,” and Nana’b’oozoo told the old woman of his hard luck.

¹⁵ Basil Johnston, “The Breadmaker” in *The Gift of the Stars: Anungook gauh meenikooying* at 8 (Ontario: Kegdonce Press, 2010).



“Eeeeeeyoooooh!” the old woman cried. “I’m as poor as you are. This is all I’ve got to eat,” she said, showing Nana’b’oozoo the ball of dough that she had saved.

“Just a crust is all I need,” Nana’b’oozoo said, and he lay down and was soon fast asleep. In moments he was snoring.

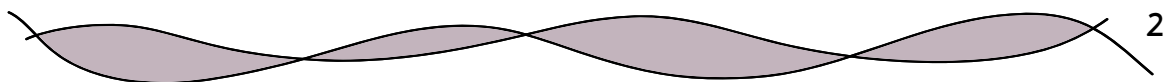
The old woman took the ball of dough, broke it in half. This she rolled around in the palm of her hand. Then she put this half ball near the coals of the fireplace.

In the heat the ball of dough began to puff out. It got bigger and bigger until it was the size of a pumpkin. It was too big, too brown for the sleeping beggar. The old woman took the large loaf and hid it in her weegwaum. She then took the remaining ball of dough and broke it in half. After she rolled it into a small ball, the old woman put it near the coals. The same thing happened. This too she hid in her weegwaum. Again and again she broke the ball of dough in half. Again and again the little ball of dough became a huge loaf of bread. She squirreled all the loaves away for herself.

By and by her guest woke up. “I had a good dream,” he said. “I dreamed of bread and a good meal...”

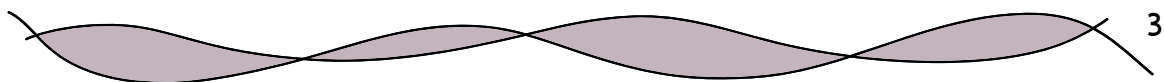
Before Nana’b’oozoo could finish what he was going to say, the old woman wailed, “Eeeeeeyoooooh. There’s been a terrible accident. The bread that I was baking for you fell into the fire. Now I have nothing to give you!”

Nana’b’oozoo got to his feet. He pointed a finger straight into the old woman’s face. “You lie,” he said sharply. “You are a liar! Worse, you are a stingy old buzzard. You wouldn’t give a crumb to a hungry neighbour. For that you will never eat a whole mouthful of food. From now on you’re going to be a bird. For your meals you’ll eat worms, bugs, insects, grubs.” At that moment the old woman became a woodpecker.

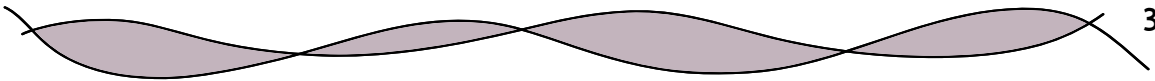


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to someone who is in need |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An old woman is baking; she has plenty of bread (ten loaves). Happy at the thought of food for that evening and many evenings to come, she gives a crust to her dog. • Her dog growls at an approaching person; the woman recognizes Nana'b'oozoo. • Nana'b'oozoo tells Nokomis about his hard luck and asks for a bun or crust of bread. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The woman pretends she only has one loaf: "I am as poor as you." • Nana'b'oozoo says that a "crust is enough." He gives her time to consider his request (he falls asleep as she bakes smaller and smaller bits of dough that always grow into huge loaves). • The woman decides Nana'b'oozoo does not deserve any of those beautiful loaves. She hides the loaves and, when Nana'b'oozoo wakes up, she tells him all the bread has fallen into the fire. • Nana'b'oozoo, calling her out for her lie and stinginess, turns her into a woodpecker. |
| <p>REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: The woman held prejudices about Nana'b'oozoo's character and deservingness ("That good for nothing beggar"). These inform her decision not to share. • Unsaid: Assessments of another's 'worthiness' to an essential resource that we are able to provide (here, a crust of bread) can undermine more important legal obligations (selflessness through sharing, generosity, and focusing on need instead of worth). • Said: Lying and stinginess are both violations of our responsibilities to others. • Said: Consequences for lying/hoarding what we have (including failing to help others when/with what we can) can include present and future deprivation. Here, the woman was transformed and never able to enjoy "a whole mouthful of food again." However, she (as a woodpecker) is still able to eat, so her deprivation from food is not total. |



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| | <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone in our communities is in some sense related. • The woman had (more than) enough to sustain herself and her immediate relations. • Our future planning (“a fine meal . . . for many evenings”) is less important than meeting another’s immediate needs. • We do not (or should not) completely control what we have or own; What we have and own are fundamentally gifts to share. <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To extended relations (those who are ‘known’ within our communities): We should have time to work through prejudices and attachments. Decisions not to help that are uninformed or based on prejudice are legal breaches that lead to consequences. For example, the woman had a duty to care for Nana’b’oozoo by sharing (only a little) from her abundance. • The right to decide: For example, Nana’b’oozoo (and her ever-increasing abundance of bread) gave the woman time to reconsider her decision not to help. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your understanding of Anishinaabeg/Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg legal teachings, are people obligated to help everyone in need? Or, does this vary depending on how close the relation is to them (brother vs. cousin vs. third cousin, twice removed)? 2. Why do you think Nana’b’oozoo was in need? 3. Why do you think the woman was living alone? Where do you think the rest of her family could be? How do you think this might have affected her response? 4. What happens when a person in need is trying to help another person in need? How can this be best navigated? |



WHY SOME TREES KEEP THEIR LEAVES WHEN OTHERS DO NOT

This version adapted from Mary Siisip Geniusz, “Why Some Trees Keep Their Leaves When Others Do Not,” *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask: Anishinaabe botanical teachings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 77 at 77-80.

Gichi-mewinzha, gii-oshki-niiging akiing, there was a little *bineshiinh*, bird, who had a serious problem. *Gii-niibing*, when it was summer, in the last storms of the season, the little *bineshiinh* had been blown from the branch on which he had taken shelter and slammed against the trunk of a tree. He huddled in pain and fear through the night and was most happy to see the sun rising the next morning. He heaved a great sigh of relief and tried to stretch his wings to fly off to find his family, but his wing would not work. It hung at his side, and he could not stretch it out. The little *bineshiinh* sat for some time pondering his problem and then decided to make the best of things until his wing was strong again. He found that he could still hop very well so he could get around enough to find his meals and cool drinks of water in the stream. By day he sat on a low branch and watched his family and friends as they took short, then long, then longer flights around the clearing, preparing for their coming trip to the Southland. The little *bineshiinh* tried not to worry, and he sang his best songs to cheer his family and himself.

But *ani-dagwaagig*, fall came. The days were shorter and colder. His family and friends stayed as long as they dared, but in the end they had to call to the little *bineshiinh*, wishing him well, and promising to see him *wii-ani-ziigwang*, when it was spring again. They took to the air, and soon the little *bineshiinh* was alone. For a time he felt very sad and almost too frightened to do anything. He had never been alone before. He tried not to think about the long, hard winter that was to come. His kind had always left the Northland at this time of year and did not return until the warm breezes came again.

After a while, though, the little *bineshiinh* said to himself, “Well, I am alone now for a time. But I can still sing a cheery song, and I can still hop about, and I can still take care of myself. My family would not want me to lose heart.” So the little *bineshiinh* tucked his broken wing up close to his body, and he went about his daily, busy, little life as best he could. After a while he found that it was really not so bad. He found ways of doing the things he had done before when he had the use of both his wings. It might take him longer to find his supper and a place to sleep, but if he tried he found he could do rather well in the cool days *dagwaagig*, during fall.



But then *ani-biboon*, winter came. The days grew even shorter, and the sun seemed far away. The great cold-blower *Giiwedín*, the North Wind, roared down upon the land, and the first snows of winter swirled about the little bineshiinh as he hopped about on his daily journeys. Giiwedín blew and blew, and the little bineshiinh huffed his feathers up so that he would not be cold. As he sat puffed up against the cold, he decided it was time to ask the other beings about him for aid. He hopped across the clearing to the base of a *wiigwaasi-mitig*, birch tree.

“O beautiful Wiigwaasi-mitig,” said the little bineshiinh, “I have a broken wing, and I could not go with my family when they left for the Southland. Could I shelter on your beautiful, white limbs and hide myself in your leaves so that I will not be cold when Giiwedín blows?”

“No,” said the wiigwaasi-mitig, with a disdainful toss of his leaves. “We in this forest have our own winter birds whom we must foster this time of year. I, for one, do my part, but I am not interested in taking in any other bineshiinyag who should have flown away by now. Be off with you!”

Humph, thought the little bineshiinh. The wiigwaasi-mitig does not seem very friendly. Perhaps he just has such weak branches that he is afraid that the weight of another bineshiinh may be too much when Giiwedín starts to blow again. I will just go ask *mitigomizh*, the oak tree, for help. He has such strong wood, surely he will be able to help me.

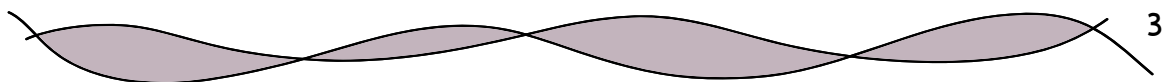
The little bineshiinh hopped over to the mitigomizh and asked that he might be allowed to hide in the leaves, close to the trunk of the mighty mitigomizh. But the mitigomizh said, “Winter is a long time. You would get hungry and eat all of my acorns if I allowed you to shelter here. It is all I can do to feed the *ajidamoog*, gray squirrels, and the *misajidamoog*, red squirrels, and the *agongosag*, chipmunks. Be off with you!”

Well, thought the little bineshiinh, perhaps the Mitigomizh is a little crowded at that. Maybe the *bagaanaakomizh*, butternut tree, will help me. So he hopped over to the bagaanaakomizh and asked if he might shelter in her until wii-ani-ziigwang.

But the bagaanaakomizh answered in a huff, “Isn’t it bad enough that the Anishinaabeg and the *makwag*, bears, paw through my branches, stealing my nuts? Must I be bothered by another beggar as well? Off with you! Hop south if you cannot fly. Just leave me alone.”

Well, thought the little bineshiinh, I suppose it must be very tiring to have people always bothering one for one’s tasty nuts. Maybe the *ozisigobimizh*, willow, will help me.

But the oziisigobimizh just waved her long leaves at the bineshiinh and said, “Oziisigobimizhiig do not talk to strangers, and we have never met. It is possible that some lesser tree might not mind a strange bird hopping on her branches, but I certainly do. Go away!”



The little bineshiinh just hung his head and then hid it under his one good wing. Such a lack of hospitality! The disrespect and humiliation hurt even more than the pain of his broken wing. He almost looked forward to the coming of Giiwedin, when he knew he would just get drowsy and slip into the last long sleep if he could not find shelter. In his pain he almost thought it might be better.

But, no, he thought, my family expects me to be brave. If no one can help me, I can help myself. I could just start hopping and maybe I will get to the Southland before Giiwedin blows again.

As the little bineshiinh started to hop toward the South, he heard a friendly voice call, “Little Brother, Little Brother. Come over here. You may live in my branches all during biboon if you choose. I have lots of room. If your wing is too sore for you to follow your kind to the Southland, it is time for the trees to offer their assistance.” The little bineshiinh hopped gratefully into the low branches of the friendly *gaawaandag*, spruce tree, and huddled close within her warm, close foliage.

“Indeed,” said the deep, booming voice of the great tall *zhingwaak*, white pine tree, “and I can help by sheltering both you and Gaawaandag when the cold winds blow.”

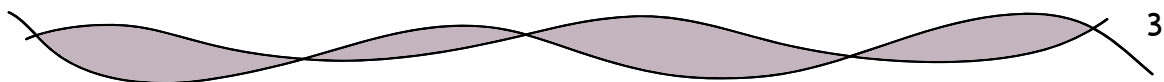
“And I can offer my cones for your food,” said the *giizhik*, cedar tree.

Safe in the branches of his new friends, the little bineshiinh settled down to wait out biboon. As Giiwedin came down upon the forest glade, the little bineshiinh was snug and sheltered again.

Giiwedin raged over the forest. He heaped snow into deep piles and then arranged them and rearranged them to suit his fancy. As he blew, Giiwedin asked Gichi-manidoo if he could have all of the leaves of the trees as he passed.

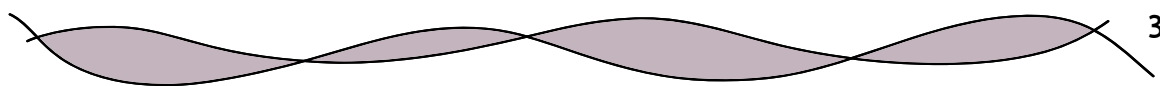
“No,” said Gichi-manidoo, “You may have the leaves of the wiigwaasi-mitig, the mitigomizh, the bagaanaakomizh, and the oziisigobimizh, and the other trees who would not help my brave little bineshiinh with the broken wing, but you may not have the leaves of the gaawaandag, who offered him a warm branch, the zhingwaak, who offered him shelter, nor the leaves of the giizhik, who offered him food. They shall keep their leaves when you blow over the land.”

And so it was then, and so it is now. Mii’ iw Miigwech.

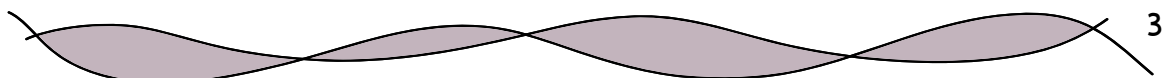


CASE BRIEF

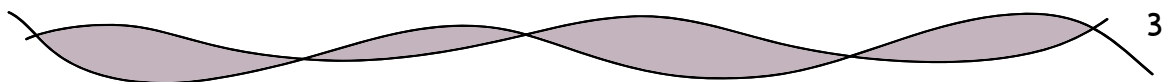
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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to someone who is in need and without close kin |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small bineshiinh (bird) hurts himself at the end of summer and can't fly south! • In the fall, bineshiinh's family fly away, and he is alone. • For a while, while it is still warm enough, bineshiinh adapts, finds food, and stays optimistic. • But, when winter came, and Giiwedin (North Wind) started blowing, bineshiinh could not sustain himself: "he decided it was time to ask the other beings about him for aid." He explains his situation and need to several trees. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiigwaas-mitig (birch) refuses as she has her "own winter birds whom we must foster." • Mitigomizh-mitig (oak) refuses because he says bineshiinh would eat all of his acorns, and he already feeds the squirrels and chipmunks. • Bagaanakomizh (butternut tree) refuses, saying that it's bad enough that Anishinaabeg and bears eat his nuts, and bineshiinh would just be another beggar. • Oziisgobimizh (willow) refuses, saying she doesn't talk to strangers: maybe a "lesser tree" would not mind a strange bird hopping on her branches. • Bineshiinh is discouraged by the lack of hospitality, but persists because he knows his family expects him to be brave. • Bineshiinh starts hopping south. • Other trees offer their assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gaawaandaag (spruce): "if your wing is too sore for you to follow your kind to the Southland, it is time for the trees to offer their assistance." Bineshiinh can shelter in her branches. ○ Zhingwaak (white pine) offers to shelter spruce and bineshiinh. ○ Giizhig (cedar) offers her cones as food. • Giiwedin (North Wind) rages and asks Gichi-manidoo for the leaves of trees • Gichi-manidoo says that Giiwedin can have the leaves of the birch, oak, butternut, willow, and the other trees who would not help bineshiinh, but not the leaves of those who offered their assistance. |



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| <p>REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: there is a law of reciprocity in kinship/community relationships. Mino-bimaadiziwin is inherently relational: when we help others, we open ourselves to help. On the other hand, when we refuse to help, we expose ourselves to future vulnerability/deprivation. <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: The trees that did not help bineshiinh could have done so without sacrificing their own being or existing obligations to others. • Unsaid: Some forces/actors are non-negotiable (for example, Winter and Giiwedín just happen. They cause hardship, but they are also essential (see Lindsay Borrows' retelling)). <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story explores answers to two questions in relation to responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One, from the perspective of bineshiinh, the story explores the question of responsibility when there is a sudden diminishment in mobility/kinship connections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bineshiinh has a duty to use his available resources, to ask for help, and to recall his membership in an existing family (even when that family is not around). ▪ Second, from the perspective of the trees, the story explores responsibilities for helping those experiencing vulnerability? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others (the trees and those who are called upon to step into kinship relations) have obligations to respond to requests for assistance or even actively offer their help when they know another is in need. • We have a responsibility to determine what we can and cannot control in every situation (for example, no one could stop winter or the wind and no one could undo bineshiinh's injury). |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the boundaries to sharing or offering assistance to another? Could the trees have reasonably refused to help if they were at the limits of their capacities? (We are assuming they were not). 2. Could the trees have refused to help bineshiinh without "disrespect and humiliation"? How do we respectfully/lawfully uphold boundaries? (This story doesn't have much to say about this). |



3. ILRU's Choose-Your-Own-Adventure exploration of this story is available at <https://www.inklewriter.com/stories/4436>. A “visual telling” by the ILRU research team is also available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rszfi7K0fM&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR03Yj9ssoaQx07Nsm2Go7Qnz_ttjBhifEQUuyE8ayw5TNTJNstZdOVp85E



FOUR WARRIORS FIND NAANABOZHO

This version adapted from Mary Siisip Geniusz, “Four Warriors Find Naanabozho,” *Plants have so much to give us, all we have to do is ask: Anishinaabe botanical teachings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 286 at 286-289.

Gichi-mewinzha, Naanabozho went missing. The Anishinaabeg had not seen him for at least two generations.

Everyone wondered what had happened and where Naanabozho’s journeys had taken him that he was so long away from his people. Four young men from one village fell to wondering where their Great Uncle had taken himself.

They consulted their elders who all told them, “Oh, Naanabozho must be off on one of his longer journeys. Do not worry about him. When he is ready he will come back.”

But the young men were impatient, as the young will be. They said, “If we could find Naanabozho, people would tell stories about us. We would be famous. And we could ask Naanabozho for presents. Surely he would grant us our dearest wishes if we were to journey far and suffer great hardships just to find him and bring him greetings from his nephews the Anishinaabeg.”

So, the four made great preparations to journey far in search of Naanabozho. They made a great show of hunting game and drying the meat. They pounded the dried meat into fat and berries and made cakes of pemmican to sustain them on a long journey. They took parched corn and popped wild rice and dried berries, all light foods that would give them strength to go a long, long way.

They started off with the well wishes of their families and friends very early in the spring, before the ice was even off the lakes. They went off on snowshoes so that they could use the frozen rivers and streams and lakes of their northern home as highways into the unknown. They set their journey into the northwest, for their elders had told them that Naanabozho might well have been traveling to where he was in charge of the Northwest wind.

The young men traveled a very far way from their village while the lakes were frozen. When Break Up came, they rested and spent their time making *jiimaan* so that they could continue traveling. They peeled birch trees for the skin, gathered spruce roots to make *wadab* to sew it onto the frame, and gathered pine sap to melt with charcoal to make glue



to seal the seams. They built two fine canoes to carry them once the rivers and lakes were clear of ice. They worked and worked and were ready to embark on their journey as soon as the waters were free of ice.

On and on they journeyed. They traveled every day, and they went further and further into the Northwest. They put down their *asemaa* and their *kinnikinnick*, and they asked their Guardians for help and direction and guidance in their search for Naanabozho. Finally after months of journey they came to an island in the middle of a great northern lake that was directly under the *Jiibayag niimi'idiwag*, the flashing, dancing Northern Lights.

The men put in to the shore and walked inland until they came to a clearing that was surrounded by high red-stone cliffs on three sides. At the foot of the cliffs were cedar trees in a circle, and in the very center of the clearing sat Naanabozho. He sat as if he were asleep, with his eyes closed. He had been sitting there so very long that a tall cedar tree had grown right on top of his head and the roots hung down the sides of his face like hair.

The young men advanced into the clearing and boldly shouted, “Ahow, Naanabozho! Aaniin! Boozhoo!”

Naanabozho opened his eyes slowly. He stretched one arm after another. Then he reached up and lifted the cedar tree off of his head and set it down at his side. He rose to his feet and heaved a great sigh.

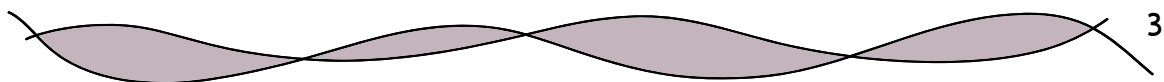
Only after a great while did Naanabozho say, “Ahow! Aaniin, my relatives. Have you come to visit your old uncle? Or do you come to ask me for something?”

The young men looked at each other then the boldest said, “Greetings, Naanabozho. We have journeyed far to find you. We have heard all of our lives about the Great Naanabozho and how generous he is. So we thought we would find you to ask you for gifts to help your relatives the Anishinaabeg.”

“Yes,” said Naanabozho, “You are right, I am a generous uncle who has given his relatives many good things. What more do you want?”

The bold young man said, “I want to be a great warrior. I want to be as bold as my Great Uncle, and I want people to tell great stories about my exploits.”

“Howa!” said Naanabozho, “You are a bold one! You have the courage to make this long journey just to find me. I guess you will be a great warrior and one that your people will remember with stories in years to come. Remember when you go into battle that you are a brave man whom your Great Uncle believes will be a famous warrior.”



The first young man sat down beaming with pride, and a second young man stood up to say, “Oh, Mighty Naanabozho, son of the West Wind Spirit and the Anishinaabe woman. Aaniin! We have come a very long way and have suffered great hardship to find you. We decided on this journey in the fall of the year. We hunted long hours and brought down much game so that we could leave our families well provided for and so that we could make a large quantity of pemmican to sustain us on our journey.

We made strong *aagimag*, snowshoes, to strap to our feet so that we might start out while the lakes and rivers of Anishinaabewaki were still covered with ice. Then we camped during Break Up and made two fine canoes of wiigwaasi-mitig to carry us further.

We searched and searched for you. We put down asemaa and kinnikinnick to ask our Guardians for help in finding you. Then one day we saw your beautiful island under the Jiibayag niimi’idiwag. We beached our jiimaan and walked inland until we found you napping under the Grandmother Giizhik. Oh Great Naanabozho, Great Uncle, I ask that you remember your relatives the Anishinaabeg, and for myself I ask that I may have the gift of oratory, that I may be a maker of speeches that will be useful at the council fires of our Nation. Mii’iw. Miigwech.”

“Well,” said Naanabozho, “It seems to me that you will make a fine speaker, whose words will be remembered for generations. Be sure to speak with pride and to always urge your listeners to remember the Anishinaabeg of the Seventh Generation in any of their decisions.”

“And you,” said Naanabozho, turning to the third young man. “What have you come to ask of your Great Uncle?”

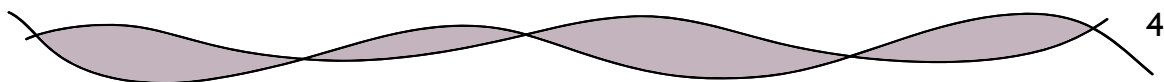
“I want Great Medicine Power,” said the third young man boldly. “I want Power that will be of use to our people in the time to come so that they will speak about me and honor me.” The words were no sooner out of the young man’s throat than he was changed before their eyes into a tall cedar tree.

“There,” said Naanabozho. “Now you have your wish. The Anishinaabeg will be able to pick your leaves and branches and use your bark and your roots and all of the parts of you as medicine in the time to come. You have Great Medicine Power.”

“And you, my fine young fellow, what have you to ask of Naanabozho?” Without hesitation the last young man blurted out, “I want to live forever!”

“Granted,” said Naanabozho. In the place of the last young man there was a great, gray, granite stone, tall and solid and firm.

“There,” said Naanabozho. “Now you will live forever, for only the rocks never die.”



Then Naanabozho yawned a great yawn and stretched his arms above his head. He sat back down in the spot he had been before the warriors arrived, and he picked up the cedar tree with

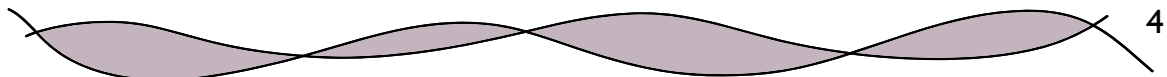
the long roots and placed it back on his head. He arranged the roots around his face like long hair, and he closed his eyes.

The two young warriors stood for a long time, watching Naanabozho sleep. Then they walked to the cedar tree and the rock who had been their companions.

They placed their hands on them and whispered, “*Giga-waabamininim miinawaa*, I will see you later, Brothers.”

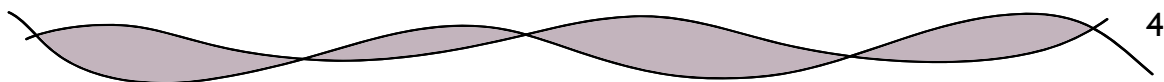
Then they walked slowly back to their canoes to begin their journey home.

Mino-nibaan, sleep well, Naanabozho. Mii’iw. Miigwech.

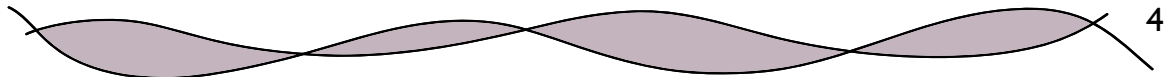


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to transformations (changes) in kin relations (our own and others') |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This story takes place at a time when Naanabozho is missing from the Anishinaabeg. • Four young men wish to know Naanabozho's whereabouts. Their motivations include acquiring fame and gifts from their "Great Uncle." • After many preparations and long searching, they find Naanabozho, who rises from his slumber to greet them. • The four young warriors ask for four gifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The first asks to be a great warrior. Naanabozho recognizes his courage to come to him: "Great Uncle believes [you] will be a famous warrior." ○ The second makes a speech, asking for the gift of oratory. Naanabozho recognizes this gift, and advises him to "speak with pride and always urge your listeners to remember the Anishinaabeg of the Seventh Generation in any of their decisions." ○ The third asks for Great Medicine Power; Naanabozho turns him into a cedar. ○ The fourth asks to live forever; Naanabozho turns him into a rock. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The boys' Elders/families did not stop them from their journey, and granted them well-wishes and directions. • The two boys who remained human said goodbye to the two who were now a cedar tree and a rock: "They placed their hands on them and whispered, "Giga-waabaminim Miinawaa, I will see you later, Brothers." |



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| <p style="text-align: center;">REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: The young warriors' Elders and families are not convinced the journey is necessary, but support it anyway by providing advice and encouragement. • Unsaid: We can meet young people's needs for discovery or change with teachings, support, and recognition of their own choices and abilities, rather than shutting down ideas or directions we do not consider suitable. • Unsaid: The men who were transformed were not 'lost' to their community, but were changed in ways that unlocked their desires (while at the same time requiring a different relationship between them and their kin). |
| <p style="text-align: center;">BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This story, like some others (for example, <i>Robin</i> and <i>She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design</i>), offers a powerful account of transformation (of people fundamentally changing in response to a challenge or desire regarding their identities). How do you see transformation working today? How do families and communities affect—and respond to—people's desires for change, or for the changes that result from these desires? 2. "Be careful what you wish for." Do you think this saying has any relevance to this story? Are some values not meant to be 'embodied' by humans? Does this story teach us about humility? How, in your experience, is humility reflected in law? |



NENEBOJO AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER

This version adapted from Robert Paudash (Hiawatha, Rice Lake), “Nenebojo and his younger brother” in *Some Myths and Tales of the Ojibwa of Southeastern Ontario*, collected by Paul Radin (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914) 9 at 9-11.

Nenebojo and his brother Po•kwis were living together. During the summer they used to fish and then dry their fish for winter use.

Nenebojo had his fish stored at his home and so did Po•kwis. In the autumn, as soon as they stopped fishing, they started to eat their winter supply. One day Po•kwis came over to Nenebojo and asked him whether he would be willing to use his own (Nenebojo's) fish first and then, when they had finished these, begin Po•kwis'. Nenebojo agreed to this proposal, and Po•kwis came every day to get food for himself and his family. After a while Nenebojo's supply ran out, and, as it was agreed that when that happened Nenebojo was to use the fish of Po•kwis, he went over to Po•kwis' lodge and asked for some fish. Po•kwis, however, told him that if he wanted any fish he should go out and get some. Day after day Nenebojo went to Po•kwis to ask for fish, but Po•kwis only threw him a few of the leavings of the last meal, telling him to take them to his children. Then Nenebojo became discouraged and stopped going to Po•kwis' lodge. He went out hunting every day after that, but could not kill anything. All he could find were some dried thorn-berries, and these his children and wife ate all winter, until they became very weak and were almost in a starving condition.

One day, while Nenebojo was out hunting, he saw an arrow drop near him. He went out and picked it up. Then he heard someone calling and saying, “That is my arrow, bring it here.” Twice this was said to him before he picked the arrow up. Then looking up toward the hill, he saw a man standing there. When he got near the man, the latter asked him what he was doing here in the woods, and Nenebojo said that he was out here in the woods trying to kill something for his starving family to eat. Then the man told him that he knew all about his (Nenebojo's) wants, and how he had been cheated out of his fish, and that he had come to bless him. Then Nenebojo was told to go to a certain lake and cut a chunk of ice, take his bow-string, tie the ice on his back and carry it home. Then he was to put it in a hollow of the ground near his home. In the morning, if he went to the hollow, he would find something to eat. He was told that while carrying the ice home, he was on no account to look back, although he would hear voices saying, “This is Nenebojo. What is he going to do with that ice? Hit him! Hit him! Throw him down!” He was told not to take heed of these voices, for if he did, the blessing given by the man near the hill would not be fulfilled.

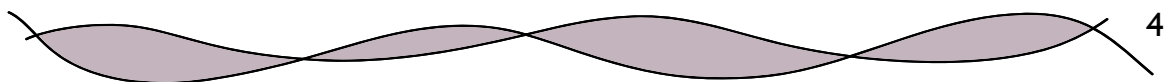


In the morning, when Nenebojo went out to see the piece of ice he had brought home on the previous night, he saw a good many fine fishes in place of the ice. He picked them up and took them home, and his wife helped him to clean and dry them. After that they had plenty to eat throughout the winter.

Just about the time when Nenebojo was starving, Po•kwis' supply ran out, so he started out hunting for food for his family. He had seen Nenebojo going out frequently in search of food and come back in the evening without anything. Now, he was in the same dilemma. Some days after, not seeing Nenebojo, he thought he would go over and visit him. He found Nenebojo at home with plenty to eat. Po•kwis asked him for some, but Nenebojo told him to go out and get his own fish. Po•kwis went home, but returned the next day and asked where he had gotten these fish. Nenebojo told him that he had met a man in the woods and that he had blessed him.

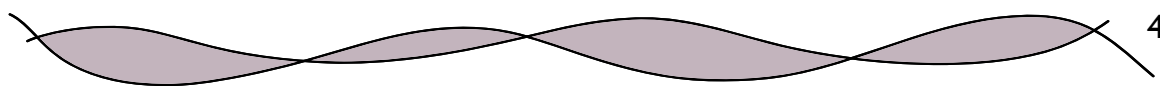
One day, as Po•kwis was going out in the same direction as Nenebojo, when he was starving and looking for food, he also saw an arrow dropping near him. Then he heard a voice from the top of the hill say, "Thief, thief, you have stolen my arrow, and also Nenebojo's fish. Bring me my arrow, here to the place where I am standing." Po•kwis picked the arrow up and brought it to him. Then the man asked him what he was doing, and Po•kwis answered that he was trying to kill a few animals, so that he might have something with which to feed his family, as all his supply of fish had become exhausted and he had nothing to eat. Then the man told him to go out to the lake, cut a piece of ice, take his bowstring and tie the ice on his back and then run straight home and leave the cake of ice outside his door. When he returned in the morning, he would find something to eat there. He was not, however, to look back while carrying the ice to his home, although someone would call out, "Thief, knock him down!" After Po•kwis had tied the cake of ice to his back, he started off home. He did not go far, before he heard a voice behind him saying, "Thief, thief, knock him down! Where is he going with that cake of ice?" Po•kwis turned around to see who was following him but he did not see anybody. He went on again and turned around twice before he got to his lodge. Then he placed the cake of ice outside and went in. He was not in long, before he thought of his cake of ice. So he came out to see what had happened. In the morning, he went out again, but he found only some very small fish. He cleaned these and had to use them all winter, for that is all he got until spring.

Thus he was taught never to cheat his brother Nenebojo again.

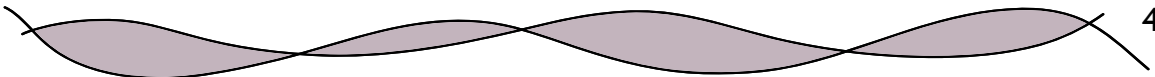


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to breaches of trust and continuing needs in kinship relations |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nenebojo and his brother Po•kwis were living close to each other, each storing their dried fish for winter use. • In the fall, after the brothers had stopped fishing for the year, Po•kwis asked Nenebojo if they could both use Nenebojo’s supply of dried fish first, finishing these before starting on Po•kwis’ fish. Nenebojo agreed, and Po•kwis came every day to get fish for himself and his family. • When Nenebojo’s supply ran out, he went over to Po•kwis’ lodge and asked for some fish. • Po•kwis told him that, if he wanted fish, he should go get some himself. • While out hunting, Nenebojo saw an arrow drop near him. A man asks a Nenebojo to bring the arrow to him. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nenebojo keeps asking Po•kwis for fish, but Po•kwis only gives him scraps for his children. • Nenebojo gives up asking and tries hunting, but finds only dried thornberries to keep his family from starving. • Nenebojo returns the stranger’s arrow, explains what he is doing in the woods, and follows the man’s instructions to get some ice to bring back to his home, ignoring any voices that say they will harm him. Nenebojo is gifted with plenty of fish. • Po•kwis, now also starving, asks Nenebojo for some of his fish. Nenebojo refuses to give him any but does tell him about meeting the man who blessed him. • Po•kwis goes out like Nenebojo did. He meets the same man and is given same instructions, including not to look back while he is bringing the ice to his home. • Po•kwis does look back, and is only gifted with small fish to survive the winter. |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: Po•kwis was wrong to break the fish-sharing agreement (“cheat”). • Said: Nenebojo gave Po•kwis multiple chances to redeem himself, before giving up. |



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| <p>reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Do not give up on family members (unless you have to). • Said: Nenebojo sustains himself and his family as best he's able, and trusts the help that he receives from the stranger. • Unsaid: Nenebojo has no continuing obligation to help Po•kwis (by giving him fish), but he does act with honesty in telling his brother how he got them. • Unsaid: We do not have to share ALL our gifts with others (in this story, worthiness is an acceptable assessment of whether one shares), but it does seem important not to mislead and to give others the guidance they need to make their own choices. • Said: Po•kwis does not trust in others, even when they are providing for him. • Unsaid: He is more concerned about his own reputation in heeding the voices calling him a thief. • Said: Po•kwis is still given enough to survive, even though he breached two agreements. • Unsaid: Everyone in a community should have access to what is essential to survive, especially if they are responsible for others (Po•kwis had a family to feed). • Said: This story teaches Po•kwis (and all readers) not to cheat. • Unsaid: This means being honest in upholding agreements, being true to our word, and being trustful that others will provide for us when we are in need. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you think the families of Nenebojo and Po•kwis may have influenced the decisions that they made? 2. In many stories, people who act wrongly are transformed as a response to their wrongdoing. Why do you think this did not happen in this case? 3. Who do you think the man who helped Nenebojo and Po•kwis was? Are such helpers still active in our lives? In your understanding, how does spiritual or non-human help interact with the responsibilities and expectations that people have for each other? |



THE BACHELOR

This version adapted from Yellow-Head (Rama), "The Bachelor," *Some Myths and Tales of the Ojibwa of Southeastern Ontario*, collected by Paul Radin (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914) 59 at 59-61.

There was once an old bachelor who lived all alone. He knew everything that was going on, although he never went anywhere. One day he thought he would go and get himself a wife. At some distance away from his house there lived some people. He started to go up to them, when he saw two young women coming along. He quickly grabbed one of them and, holding his hand over her mouth, he took her to his home. The girl was badly frightened, but he told her he would take her back to her home next day. On the following day she asked him when he was going to take her home and he said, "Tomorrow, I am very busy to-day." The morrow came, but he did not take her back.

On the following morning, when the young girl woke up, she saw an old woman in the house instead of the old man. The old woman said to her, "You call me grandmother from now on." After the old woman had been with her for some time, she began to like her and forgot that she had been stolen from her own people.

One day an animal came to the house. The old woman grabbed a stick and chased it up a tree, followed it up the tree and there struck it. It fell on her and knocked her down, and then the girl noticed that her grandmother was the same old man who had brought her there.

The next day the girl had her menses, so the old woman made a little house for her to stay in until she was well. The old woman told her that she was not to be idle there, for it was the custom for girls to make mats out of basswood-bark strings at such time. She also told her that if anyone came to bless her during the night, she was to accept him and do just as he bade her.

The first night she was there no one came. The second night, after she had fallen asleep, someone came and poked her on the back, but just an arm stuck in through the door and she was given a string of beads. The girl was sure that it was the old man, who was disguising himself as an old woman. When the old woman came the next morning and asked her if anyone had been there, the girl said, "Someone came and gave me these beads, but he never said a word." Then the old woman said, "I will keep them for you; he might come and give you something else tonight. I warn you again to do exactly as he bids you." Just then the girl decided to mark the beads, so she broke one bead on one end of the string, and then handed them to the old woman. Then the old woman went back to the house.

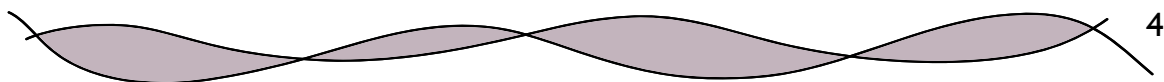


The next night, after the girl had fallen asleep, someone again poked her in the back and handed her a string of beads. She looked at them and saw that they were the same beads she had received the night before. She made up her mind to escape that night. So some time later, she got up, set fire to the whole shack, and escaped.

When the old man came again to fool her, he saw that she was gone, and he couldn't trace her. He asked the stakes that were around the house if they knew where she had gone, but none knew until he came to the one at the door. This stake said that she had disappeared right into the ground, but where she went he didn't know. The old man started out to follow her. The girl finally came back to her own people and told them that the man who had stolen her was pursuing her. The people were very much afraid of the old man, so they said they would invite him to a feast and get even with him there.

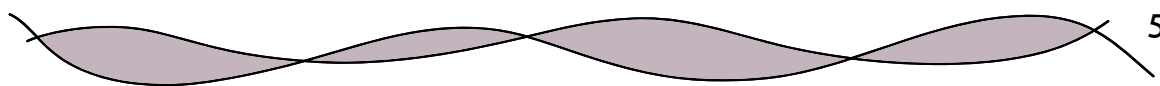
When the old man arrived, they started telling him stories until far into the night, taking turns at sleeping and talking. Finally, they invited him to the feast and by that time he forgot what he was there for.

First, the people got some sharp fish-scales, which they laid across the room where the man was to dance. Then they all started to dance, each one keeping in the centre of the room, but the old man danced all over the room. Suddenly he yelled, "There is something in my foot, pull it out." But the people sent the thing further into his foot, telling him that they could not draw it out. So the old man told them to cut his whole leg off and he would attach it to the body again later. Then he told them to place the leg somewhere. Pretty soon he got something in his other foot and had to have that one cut off too, and this leg was placed beside the other one. He now began dancing on his hands when something stuck in one arm, and it had to be taken off. Then he danced on the other hand, until something got into that one too, and it had to be removed. The arms were placed next to the legs. Then he began to dance on his head, when something got into his head. He told them to try and pull it out, but they only pushed it further in. Finally they cut off his head. Then he began dancing on the rest of his body. The people, in the meanwhile, burned his limbs and his head, and then took their war-clubs and pounded the body to death.

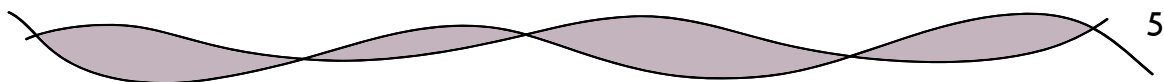


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to abuses of kinship roles and responsibilities |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An old bachelor, living all alone, abducts a young woman to be his wife. • He disguises himself as an old woman (“grandmother”) and gains the girl’s trust. • The girl eventually notices that the woman is actually the old man. • The ‘old woman’ makes a little house for the girl to seclude herself during her period, and tells her to accept any blessing she receives during the night. • On the second night, the ‘old woman’ gives her a string of beads. The girl tells the ‘old woman’ about this, and marks the beads before giving them back. • The ‘old woman’ gives the girl the same beads the next night. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The girl marks the beads to confirm her hunch that the old woman/man is trying to fool her. • The girl burns the little house when she escapes. • The girl returns to her own people and tells them about her ordeal and continuing danger. • The community make a plan to respond to the old man’s conduct and continuing danger by making a plan to fool him in turn (to “invite him to a feast and get even with him there”). • The community, working together, manage to kill the man despite his great power (ability to live with his body in pieces). |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: The girl uses her internal resources (observation, planning, deception, determination, destroying/dismantling her confining circumstances (burning down the shack), and communicating with trusted others) to escape and respond to the dangerous situation. • Unsaid: The old bachelor is a danger to both the girl and to others. • Unsaid: The community’s response is necessary to respond to the man’s continuing danger. He must be completely |



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| | <p>changed (dismembered and burned) for the risk to be neutralized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: Communities (extended kin networks) have to work together to respond to the danger/risk posed by abusive individuals and situations. <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The old man was grooming the girl to enable further abuses (likely sexual abuse). • The community could have acted sooner to help the girl, but their fear prevented them. We might ask whether this is an indication of the problems created by, or the complicity of silence, in the face of abuse. <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community (extended kin) had a duty to protect the girl and respond to the danger posed by the old bachelor. The girl had a right to be protected. • The girl had a right to decide who to live with. The bachelor committed a grave offence by limiting her choice, not acting with honesty (by trying to deceive her), and abusing his power. • The old man's serious misconduct justifies the girl's and the community's response, including their own acts of deception. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you think the old man was living alone? Was his isolation a significant factor in his danger and abusive actions? 2. Why do you think it took the community so long to act despite the man harming and grooming the girl? 3. Why do you think the feast was used as the space where the community responded to the man's abuse? Are feasts often spaces where legal responses are delivered? |



THE FATHER WHO WAS JEALOUS OF HIS YOUNGEST SON

This version adapted from Sam Lute (Chemung Lake), "The father who was jealous of his youngest son," *Some Myths and Tales of the Ojibwa of Southeastern Ontario*, collected by Paul Radin (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914) 67 at 67-70.

Once there was a man who had three sons and one daughter. These sons were so lazy and good-for-nothing that, although there was plenty of game about that could easily have been killed, the family was emaciated and almost starving. In fact, they were so lazy that they would shut their eyes when any game passed their house. The youngest boy, however, when he grew up, became a good hunter. He used to kill birds and get dried meat, which the family ate during the winter. After a time he learned to kill deer, bear, and mink, so that his folks had plenty of dried meat. After a while the father became jealous of his son, and he said to the other two boys, "That little brother of yours will soon kill all the game that there is around here and won't leave any of it for us to hunt. We must get rid of him in some way. I will go over to the white giant and ask him to hide a little distance from the house, and then I'll send the boy out there." So the father went over and spoke to the giant, and the giant was willing to do as he said.

In the evening the giant passed by the father's house, but the boy was not in. When the boy came back, the father said to him, "Someone must have passed our house, for the tracks are very large. You had better chase him immediately." The boy answered, "There is no hurry, I'll go in the morning." The father tried to persuade him to go then, but the boy refused.

In the morning the boy got up very early and told his sister where he was going. The sister did not know that her father and her brothers were planning to kill him. When the boy got outside the house, he shot his arrow in the direction of the giant's tracks and then went on. The arrow went quite a distance and when it dropped, the boy, looking around, saw a great white giant sleeping. When the giant opened his eyes and began to rise, the boy shot at him with his bow and arrow and killed him. Then he went back, leaving the giant there, and when he reached home he told his father that he had killed the great giant whose tracks they had seen the night before. Then all four went out to skin the giant. After they had him skinned, the boy gave the hide to his father and kept the meat for himself.



The next day, when the boy had gone out to hunt, the father went to a lion and asked him to hide himself at some distance, so that when the boy came out to look for him, he could tear him to pieces. When the boy got home in the evening, the father told him that someone had passed by in front of their house. The boy said, "Well, I will look for him in the morning." In the morning the boy again shot and followed his arrow, and thereby came to the place where the lion was sleeping. He shot him with his arrow and killed him. Then he immediately skinned him and brought the skin home for his father to lie upon. Then the father said to himself, "I must kill him or before long he will have killed all the game and left nothing for us to hunt. I'll go and get a great sea-serpent and have him lie in the river, and when the boy goes for water, he will most likely walk across the creek and step upon the sea-serpent's horn which will hold him fast."

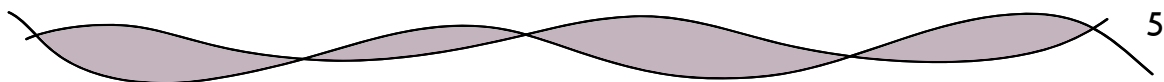
When the father thought that the sea-serpent would be in the river, he sent the boy to get some water. The boy jumped across the creek and landed upon the sea-serpent's horn. Immediately he thought of his mother who, upon dying, had blessed him and had given him a little box about the size of a bee, which he always carried about him and which contained a sword and a little dog. He now opened this box, took out the dog and, rubbing him down and up, said, "Grow big." The dog grew and became very big. Then he told him to go and bite off the sea-serpent's horn. The dog snapped the horn right off, pulled it out of his master's foot, and then licked the wound until it was fully healed. Then the boy went home with the water.

The father was very angry, for the boy had been gone a long time. The boy told his father all that had happened, and the father again said to himself, "Well, I'll kill that boy next winter. I'll get a moose to run by this house and then go straight north. I'll let a week pass before I tell the boy that the moose passed this way."

When winter came, the boy went out to hunt again, but for some days he brought back nothing, nor had he seen any game pass the house. About a week later, the father told the boy that someone's tracks were to be seen in front of the house. The boy said that he would go after the game in the morning. So the following morning he got up very early and set out. He shot his arrow due north and followed it through the air for one day, when he saw a moose running just ahead of him. He quickly descended, killed the moose and then proceeded to skin it. When he got through, it was dark, and he decided to stay there for the night. He hung the body upon a branch and, wrapping himself up in the hide, he went to sleep. As the hide was still wet, it froze upon his body, and in the morning he found that he couldn't get it off.

When the father saw that the boy did not return, he said, "Now we have at last got rid of him, for he would have killed all the animals around here." The girl overheard him and said, "As you have killed my brother purposely, I will not stay here. I will go and look for him." She too had received a gift from her mother and this was the power of transforming herself into a wolf.

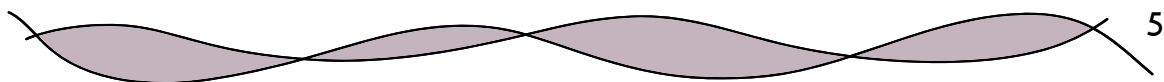
The following morning she started off, and travelled days and days towards the north until she came to a lake. Then she thought she would change herself into a wolf. She walked



along the edge of the lake, for such is the custom of wolves, and went almost entirely around the island when she suddenly smelled meat. She thought that this was probably the place where her brother had died. When looking around, she saw the body of a moose hanging on a tree. She built a fire and started to thaw the meat out. Pretty soon she came to another part of the moose and to the hide which was rolled up. When this was thawed out, the boy got up and began to tell her the story of how his father and brothers had planned this whole trick. The girl said, "We will let them starve. We will not return there any more, but strike out for another place."

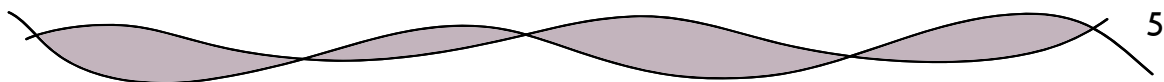
They walked on for many days, until spring came. They came to a place where there were many maples. Here they built their house and began to make sugar. One day the boy noticed big tracks, indicating that some sea-serpent had crawled by. In the morning he started out for the river. He saw a sea-serpent with only one horn coming along. He knew right away that this sea-serpent was the one his dog had bitten. He quickly took his arrow, shot the sea-serpent, and then pulling himself out of the water, started back for his home. When he got home, he told his sister the story of the missing horn. He then skinned the sea-serpent and, cutting off a large slice of meat, brought it to his father.

One day, as the boy came near his father's house, he heard a great noise within. He peeped through the window and saw three large snakes lying coiled up. These were his father and brothers. He took his arrows and shot them, chopped them all up, and told his sister to make baskets into which they could put the meat. They took this meat along with them, and whenever the ground was hollow, they threw out a handful of the meat, calling each piece by the name of the animal into which they wished to have it changed. In this way they created toads, snakes, frogs, and pollywogs.

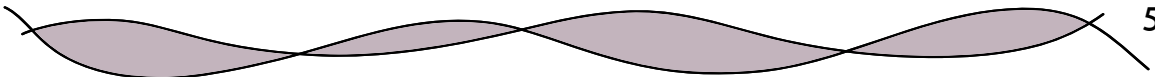


CASE BRIEF

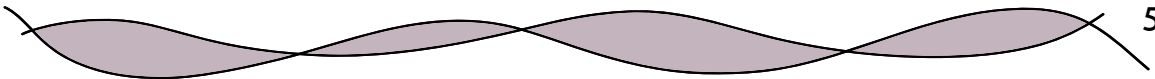
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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to vulnerability and harm within families |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A man had three sons and a daughter. Two sons were very lazy (so much so the family was nearly starving) but the youngest became a good hunter, and provided for them. • The father became jealous, and told his other sons that the youngest would soon kill all the game and leave none of it for them. • The father tried to “get rid” of the boy, enlisting the help of a giant, a lion, a sea-serpent, and a moose. Only the last gets the boy into great difficulty, as he becomes frozen in the hide. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The boy communicates with his sister, the only one unaffected by the poisonous feelings that created danger for him within the family. • The boy follows his arrows. • The boy kills the giant and lion, and gives the skin of each to his father. He uses the gift his mother gave him when she died to escape from the sea-serpent, returning with water for his father. He uses the arrow again in the winter to find the moose. • The daughter, when she realizes that the father has been trying to kill the boy, goes to find him. She uses her own gift from their mother (the ability to transform into a wolf) to find and save her brother. • The girl advises her brother that they should let the rest of the family starve, and not return to the family. • Later, the boy sees the sea-serpent again, kills it, and brings the meat to his father. • The boy sees that the father and other brothers have turned into snakes. He kills these, chops them up, and asks his sister to make baskets for the meat. They throw handfuls of this meat into the ground wherever it is hollow, creating toads, snakes, frogs, and pollywogs. |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: The father’s jealousy motivates his murderous intent. • Unsaid: Jealousy/negative emotions can undermine caring within families. |



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| <p>reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said: The boy and his sister had different assessments about how to respond to the father’s misconduct (continuing to care for them vs. letting them starve). Unsaid: It is reasonable to have different approaches to family violence/abuse, but creating conditions for personal safety are paramount. (For example, the girl may have seen more clearly that the boy could not/should not continue going back to the unsafe situation, which was only getting worse.) <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story’s decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The father was wrong/lying in saying that the boy was hunting all of the animals leaving none for the rest. In fact, the family owed its continued sustenance to the boy, who remained giving towards his family even when they didn’t ‘deserve’ it. <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Said: The young boy remained honest and generous towards his father. Unsaid: Unless it would create added danger (see The Bachelor), we have the responsibility to uphold fundamental Anishinaabe laws in all our relationships. The boy and his sister both had a right to safety, which ultimately required complete disengagement from the father and other brothers. This requires us to exercise our agency, freedom of choice, and mobility. There was a continuing relationship with the mother, even after her death. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> This story concerns deeply unhealthy family/caregiving dynamics. The father’s toxic feelings towards his son ultimately break the family apart, with much danger, harm, and violence. While the brother and his sister are able to survive and rebuild, it seems that they must only rely on their inner resources and each other in their struggles to do so. Where is law in this story? How do you think the loss of a caregiver (the wife/mother) contributed to the jealousy, anger, and violence? What about the apparent absence of other relations? What is this story telling you about how people (and law) must respond to vulnerabilities and losses within families? |



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| | <p>3. Who are you most curious about in this story? Who are you drawn to or repulsed by? How would you tell this story in the present? What would change? What do you think each of the characters needs? How might these needs be met or responded to within families, communities, or legal institutions?</p> |
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ROBIN

This version adapted from Angeline Williams, “Robin,” *The Dog’s Children: Anishinaabe Texts Told by Angeline Williams*, translated by Leonard Bloomfield, in Leonard Bloomfield and John D. Nichols, eds (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991) at 24-25.

“The narrator of these texts, Angeline Williams, *Biidaasigekwe* 'Sunlight Woman', was born at Manistique, Michigan, on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Her home in 1941 was at Sugar Island just east of Sault Ste. Marie.”¹⁶

||| Listen to the ILRU Research team reading a version of this story [here](#).¹⁷

Of old, when the Indians fasted, he (Robin) fasted. He overfasted. So then he had to go away.

He asked his parents to let him eat. “No,” they told him.

He had fasted a long time. He had, to be sure, obtained knowledge of every sort. Again, just the same, his father said to him, “Son, keep right on fasting. You will have knowledge of all things through the course of your life, if you fast.”

Then that young man addressed his father. “No. I have already got knowledge of all things,” he said, in vain, to him. “Very well, now I shall go away.”

Then he took that which he meant to use and placed it on the bosom of his garment. Red Colour it was called. It was pale-coloured vermilion. Then he got up on his feet to fly off as a bird. He flew up. Then he went away.

He came, their son, in spring, only in early spring. Their son forgot them for a time of four winters. Only when four winters had passed did he know them again.

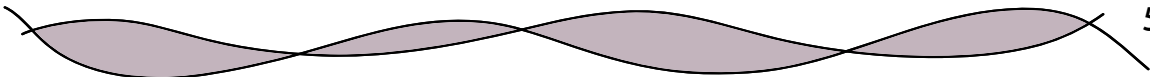
¹⁶ Angeline Williams, *The Dog’s Children: Anishinaabe Texts Told by Angeline Williams* in Leonard Bloomfield and John D. Nichols, eds (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991) at 3.

¹⁷ Lindsay Keegitah Burrows, Brendan Noyes, Tania Talebzadeh-Takiyeh, Sarah Jackson, Simon Owens, and Tara Williamson, “Opichi/Robin,” online (mp3): *Soundcloud* <<https://soundcloud.com/user-564033369/opichirobin?fbclid=IwAR2XwZzAQ5C86lOkr001jMGjXmYnRnYxPdsVjYV3FzxoI85JfDUImHGCwBE>> [<https://perma.cc/UPK3-Y48M>].



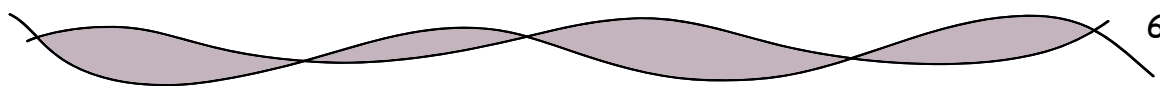
The Indian has never eaten that robin. They know that he was once a human person. For now all Indians know that he was once an Indian, very long ago.

That is as much as I know of it now.

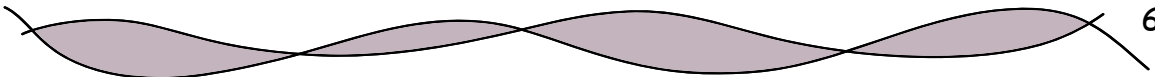


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to desires for control and freedom in caregiving relationships |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robin (a young man) fasted. He had obtained knowledge “of every sort” in the course of the fast. • He asked his parents to let him eat. • His father said “keep right on fasting. You will have knowledge of all things through the course of your life if you fast.” |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robin’s father pushes Robin to keep fasting. • Robin explains that he has already accomplished the task of obtaining knowledge. • When this fails to change his parents’ mind, Robin goes away. He becomes a real Robin, returning to visit after four years, in spring. |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Robin’s parents deeply care for son and want the best for him “you will have knowledge of all things. . . .” • Said: Robin’s fast was successful. He was right to want to stop. • Unsaid: Robin was under the control of his parents. So much so he could not break his fast without their permission. • Said: The Anishinaabeg never eat robins because they know that Robin was once human. • Unsaid: People remember this story (and its teachings) when they see robins. Robins signify the importance of trusting children’s judgment/the importance of freedom for young people within families. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Robin’s mom, it seems, was not as involved in making decisions about Robin as his father was, or, at least, Robin’s mothers’ involvement is not as clear in this telling of the story. How do you understand this? Would a different dynamic (i.e. a sharing of responsibilities) between the parents have led to a different outcome? What about other kinship relations (who seem absent from this story)? 2. What does it mean to ‘overfast’? |



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| | <p>3. Did Robin need permission from his parents to break the fast? Why?</p> |
| <p>FURTHER QUESTIONS ASKED IN ILRU'S SOUNDCLOUD RECORDING OF THIS STORY</p> | <p>1. What obligations did the parents, Niibi and Akii, have to their son, Pitchii? How did they meet these obligations? Where did they fall short?</p> <p>2. What obligations did Pitchii have to his parents? How did he meet these obligations? Where did he fall short?</p> <p>3. How can we account for the vulnerability of children in family situations? How can we account for the role—and consequences—of power or authority?</p> <p>4. Gendered roles and stereotypes often contribute to vulnerabilities and conflicts within families. How does Akii and Niibi's relationship influence how they act out their love—and their responsibilities—towards their son? Do you think Akii should have done anything more to protect Pitchii from the harm that Niibi was causing him and their family? How might <i>other</i> relations and relationships (which are not heard from in this story) help support each one of these characters, and the family as a whole?</p> <p>5. How does this story make you think about freedom of choice or, in other words, the freedom to make our own decisions? How does this freedom find balance, in family life, with responsibilities to nurture those we are caring for, or to respect those who are caring for us?</p> <p>6. In her book <i>The Wetiko Legal Principles: Cree and Anishinabek Responses to Violence and Victimization</i>, legal scholar Hadley Friedland asks the question, "How do we protect those we love, from those we love?" How do you think this question applies in this story? How do Anishinaabeg laws wrap around our families, in all situations and circumstances?</p> |



THE DOG'S CHILDREN

This version adapted from Angeline Williams, "The Dog's Children," *The Dog's Children: Anishinaabe Texts*, translated by Leonard Bloomfield, Leonard Bloomfield and John D. Nichols, eds (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991) at 56-73.

"The narrator of these texts, Angeline Williams, *Biidaasigekwe* 'Sunlight Woman', was born at Manistique, Michigan, on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Her home in 1941 was at Sugar Island just east of Sault Ste. Marie."¹⁸

Some people dwelt on islands. I know those islands. Beaver Island and Fox Island, that is where Indians must have dwelt of old. They named those islands, that one big island Big Dog Island (Fox Island); and one is smaller: Little Dog Island (Beaver Island) it is called.

A certain young woman took along her father's dog wherever she went. Then in time that woman understood the speech of that dog. It was a male dog. She kept going to all sorts of places. She was always gathering basswood bark. Then she always had that male dog with her. Then at one time he spoke to her. He told her all kinds of things. He asked her to marry him. She consented. So then they began to live together, after midwinter, living together like human beings that are married to one another. She always had him with her.

Then she conceived children. Soon she got very big with those children, towards springtime.

Then the dog who was her husband said to her, "Let us go away. Let us move camp. We shall go to an island. You will make a raft that we may cross over to that island. When we are ready to set out there will be a fair wind for our crossing. Be sure to take along your utensils which you use when you cook, and your blankets with which you cover yourself when you sleep, and your axe and your knife."

Then in the morning she got ready. Her mother said to her, "What is the matter with you that you are so big?"

"Why, I am big with children."

"Where did you get the child?"

¹⁸ Angeline Williams, *The Dog's Children: Anishinaabe Texts Told by Angeline Williams* in Leonard Bloomfield and John D. Nichols, eds (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991) at 3



“Do not worry about where I got it.”

Then she got ready. She quickly made a raft. The dog helped her, her husband. She made everything she had been told by her husband, the dog. Then they embarked and sailed across. They had a very good breeze and they disembarked there on the island.

“We shall build a house,” the one who was her husband told her.

He was not really that. She saw him in the shape of a man; he was really a dog. He was not really a human being.

Then she set about felling trees and made a big conical lodge. He helped her haul logs and balsam branches. Also she cut bark, to make her house in the proper way. When she had completed the house she lined it with balsam boughs everywhere within. She made it very well. He helped her in all this too.

“What do you want to eat?”

“Fish.”

“What kind of fish do you want to eat?”

“I should like to eat some sturgeon.”

“Very well, in the morning I will go get some.”

When she awoke in the morning, he had already arrived.

“Well, please get up. Clean the fish. You will boil the sturgeon so that we may eat.”

She went and cleaned fish at the water's edge. The sturgeon were very fine. Her kettle was full to the brim as she boiled them. Then they had their meal.

“We really have good eating.”

“Whatever you ask me that you want to eat, I shall bring it all; for instance, if you want to eat meat.”

“Later on when the deer are good, you might kill some.”

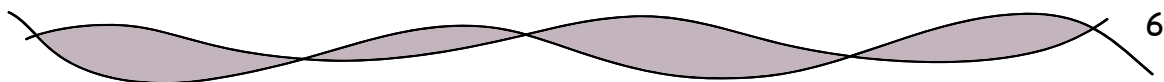
After a time the deer were good. Then he killed deer. Every morning the dog went hunting for whatever his wife wanted to eat.

One evening she felt ill.

“I am ill,” she said to him.

“Have you made everything ready?”

“Yes, I have prepared.”



“You will not be ill long,” he told her who was her husband.

Really, in a short while she gave birth to six children. Three were shaped like her and three were shaped like the dog. Then she got well.

“Get up. I will clean you.”

Then she got up. He licked her all over and cleaned her.

“This is so that tomorrow you may be as you were. Be sure to wrap our children up warm.”

Then she went to sleep. In the morning they cried out. The ones squealed like puppies; the others wept. They made the sound that children make when they weep. Then she got up and nursed her young. She suckled them all. Then she again wrapped her children up warm. Three had the form of dogs; the others had human form.

“Come, do your cooking. You will make broth. Tell me what you want to cook, meat or fish.”

“Fish.”

“I will fetch some at once.”

He fetched a sturgeon from the water's edge. Then the woman rose from where she sat. She was not ill at all from having borne children the night before. Then she did her cooking and they had their meal. She felt very well. She was very light.

After ten days those three opened their eyes. Those other three who had human form had opened their eyes from the beginning. After one more day they were walking about. Both those who were in the shape of human beings and those who were in the shape of dogs now ran about together and played. All her children spoke to her. She understood the speech of all of them. They, too, understood what she said to them.

She had children three times. Her house was full of them. She was helped at her work by those of human form. And in the same way those others were helped by them, those puppies who in the course of time had grown up; they in the same way went hunting. They had very much to eat as he was helped by his children. Also no less in winter he had food for them to eat.

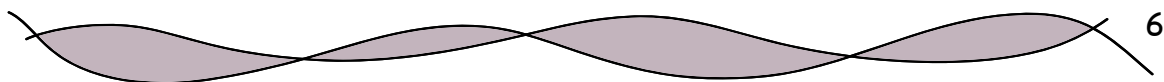
When autumn came, “I shall kill lots of fish, so that we may have enough provisions for the whole winter. For who knows when I shall kill a deer.”

Then she stored away all the fish, putting them away somewhere.

“We shall always have fish to eat.”

They lived very well.

Then at one time her brothers came where she was. They came to see how she was.



“How are you?” they asked her.

She told them, “I am very well off. Whatever I want to eat is brought to me.”

All her children were sitting in a row in the house. From afar they knew that human beings were coming to them. She had warned them: “Pay no attention to those who come. They are your uncles,” she had said to her children. Some of them barked. The rest called out with human voices.

Then those men, her brothers, went back home. Then they all consulted together.

“It will not be well at all if with all human beings it goes thus, with the human beings who will live in the course of time. Well, we shall needs have to kill them. It would be well if this were to be done. Well, our brother-in-law will be very angry,” they said.

“No. We shall first smoke before we set out. He might kill us, you know.”

Then, after all had smoked together, they made ready, all of them in a group. They carried guns as they went.

Then he knew about them in the night.

“Now in the morning they will come and kill us,” he told his wife.

“How is that?”

“That is what they have decided upon, having smoked, your brothers.”

Then the woman wept bitterly through the night.

“It is frightful that they mean thus to destroy my children,” she said.

“There is no use your thinking about it. It seems, you see, they have made up their minds to go through with it,” said her husband.

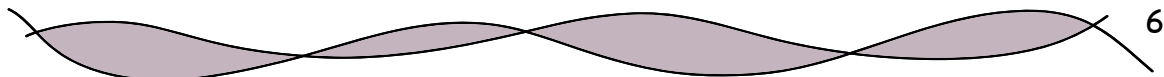
She spoke to each and all of her children. She did not sleep all night. Then in the morning they saw a canoe, as those others came toward them. It was her brothers.

“Well, so now they are coming to kill us. At any rate, I shall not simply give over.”

The man instructed all his children: “Help me.”

Then soon they came near and all the young dogs jumped into the water. They swam. Their father was at the head. They fired many shots at their brother-in-law. In the end they killed him. Also those young dogs, all the children of that dog who were like him in shape, they killed off all of them. The woman had placed indoors all those who were human in form. She was weeping bitterly.

“Now all my children have been killed,” she said.



Then they came and addressed their sister.

“Do not give thought to it. Surely you must know that it will not be good if it goes thus with the people who are to live in the future course of time, if it is to be with them as you have been now. I shall take away from here those children of yours that are human in form.”

There were three girls.

“Do not weep. Get ready. We shall lavish great love on these girls of yours. Wash your face. Clean yourself. You smell very bad. Wash your girls' faces. When you are ready, come and embark.”

The woman said to them, “Lay away all my children,” she said to her brothers.

“Indeed we shall carefully lay them away.”

They dragged them all to one place. They put them all together. They buried them. Then they set fire to the whole of their house. All of this time the woman wept grievously. She was desperate in her heart. Then she wanted to take along her store of food.

“No. Do not trouble yourself with it. You will eat when we get to our home,” they told her.

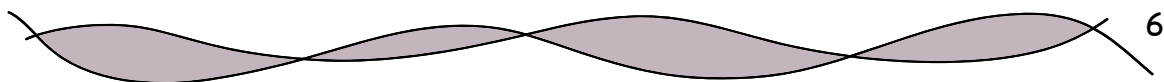
Then they went away from there and ferried across. The other people, too, off there from where they had set out, had made their preparations. Medicine had been prepared in a great kettle. When they arrived, all of them were given a bath. Then they were given that medicine to drink. When they had done all this, they were given breakfast. Those girls ate with great appetite. But the woman ate very little. Then she was addressed and carefully told how to look upon things.

“It will not be well if this way in which you have fared be the way of things, the way they are to fare who will live as mortals in the course of time. You will be well cared for until you have ceased to live.”

Then, in fact, after a time she felt better.

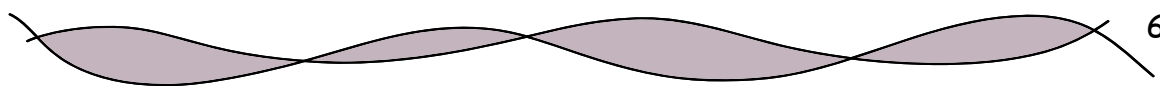
This is the end of this story of how some people must have fared once upon a time. Now, that island is called Little Dog Island. Another, Big Dog Island, is right close by. This is the end of the story. My grandmother told it to me.

Nowadays some few persons do that way, secretly living with dogs.



CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to a family member’s harmful choices |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A young woman spends much time with her father’s dog, eventually understanding its speech. The dog asks her to marry him and she consents. • She becomes pregnant, and, on her dog-husband’s advice, prepares to move with him to an island. Her mother asks why she is “so big”; the woman tells her she is pregnant but not about her relationship. • The woman and dog move to the island. Together they make a good life and have everything they need. The woman gives birth to three human and three dog children, then more (dog) children after that. All contribute as they are able. • The woman’s brothers come to see her and ask how she is doing. She tells them she is well but also tells her children to “pay no attention” to their uncles. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brothers consult and decide to kill the dog husband and kids. They smoke together before setting out. • They explain to the woman (who is very upset) why they have intervened to end her relationship with her dog husband and children. • The brothers confirm they will “lavish great love” on the three human children (girls) and agree to respectfully bury the dog-children they have killed. They then burn down the house that the woman and her dog family had built. They tell the woman she can bring none of her food stores back: “you will eat when we get to our home.” • Those who had stayed back in the community prepare for their return. When the woman and her girls arrive, they are bathed and given medicine to drink, then breakfast to eat. • The people, again, explain to the woman the reasons for their intervention, and promise “you will be well cared for until you have ceased to live.” • In time, the woman feels better. |



REASONS

What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?

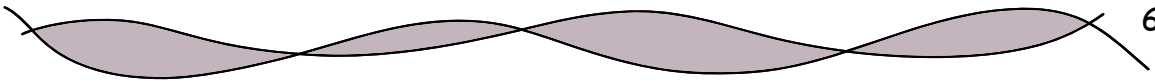
- Unsaid: The woman may not have married the dog if she had had closer/more nurturing kinship relations to begin with (For example, we could ask questions such as where is her father? And, why is her mother so seemingly disengaged from her daughter's life?).
- Said: The woman's brothers decided to re-establish their kinship with her. This was a collective, community-informed decision, which had general/future importance because the family/community perceived a danger in letting her (isolated/separated) choice to live with her dog-husband become a pattern for others.
- Unsaid: In the Anishinaabek legal tradition, while families accept that young people do make their own choices about their lives/relationships (see Speckled Design; Robin), those that threaten the vitality/coherence of the whole family or wider community/nation may require the family to intervene.
- Unsaid: Severing (unlawful) relationships can require making a clean/complete break, bringing back only things that re-establish one's connection to one's family/community.
- Said: Interventions that sever chosen relationships or activities can be painful for the individual, but, with compassion and care, healing is possible. The woman required time and care (medicine, food, love) to mourn the loss of her dog-family and reestablish her relationship with her human kin.

What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?

- This story, while rooted in a historical context that required attention be paid to the relationships between humans and dogs, helps us understand how families may intervene in situations that threaten the family or wider community's integrity/continuity.
- This story (as we are learning from it) is NOT about violent responses to eliminate new or 'different' kinship relationships. It IS about responding in direct but compassionate ways to kin whose choices threaten their own and their (existing) families' well-being. This can include those relationships that separate or alienate us from our families, as well as addictions and other damaging anti-social choices.



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| | <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The brothers were responsible for both the woman, her (human) children, and the wider community. These responsibilities motivated the actions they took, at great risk, to sever her relationship with the dog-husband and kids. The community showed its responsibility towards the woman and her human daughters by preparing food and medicine for their return, and committing to care for them. • The human children had the right to be lovingly integrated into the human community. • Unsaid: There are sometimes ‘fruits’ of damaging choices that do deserve acceptance and inclusion. Not everything/one needs to be left behind. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our understanding of this story is that it does NOT condone violent responses to eliminate new or ‘different’ kinship relationships. Instead, our understanding is that this story IS about responding to kin in direct but compassionate ways when their choices threaten their own and their families’ well-being. This can include those relationships that separate or alienate us from our families, as well as addictions and damaging choices. Is this a legitimate reading of this story? Can we acknowledge this story’s roots/historical significance (or enduring significance regarding relations between humans and dogs) while also analogizing to other choices that require intervention? 2. The woman in this story may not have married the dog if she had had closer, more nurturing kinship relations to begin with. For example, we might ask where her father is and why her mother is so seemingly disengaged from her daughter’s life. Do you agree? How do you make sense of this story (and maybe other stories that include violence and/or gendered oppression) in learning and living Anishinaabe/Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg law today? |



WEEGIBANCE SAVES HER PEOPLE

This version adapted from Basil Johnston, "Weegibance Saves her People," *Ojibwe Heritage* (McClelland & Stewart: 1976) 65 at 65-66.

Weegibance, Little Wood Fibre, was a grandmother and a member of the Leech Lake Ojibway bands. The dread pestilence, smallpox, fell upon Weegibance's village. In a short while, the greater part of the villagers lay dead after hot fever and amidst excruciating agony.

Weegibance filled ten canoes with the survivors, some of them already sick and all of them destined to die, in order to escape the place of death, and to avoid contaminating others. She led them on months of endless flight.

By day they paddled their canoes, always avoiding encampments of other people they encountered along the way; by night they camped without fires. All the while Weegibance fished and hunted to feed her people, gave them medicines to alleviate their sufferings, buried the dead.

Although sick and believing that she would die like the rest, Weegibance struggled on. One by one her friends and members of her family died, until only she remained. Resigned to death and too weak to go on, Weegibance prepared for her passing by putting into a small bay on an island where she collapsed on the beach.

When Weegibance gained consciousness, two men were sitting nearby cooking a meal and talking in muted tones. The old lady was horrified; she snapped at the men, "I am sick, I have the dreaded smallpox. "Go away." Then she began to sob.

"Then, it is too late for us," said one of the men in dismay.

Nothing was said for a long time; Weegibance was too weak; the two men knew that they too would be afflicted. Weegibance fell unconscious again.

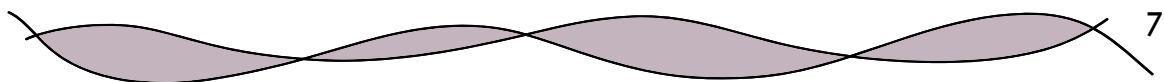
Later Weegibance awoke, the men were still there. They had not gone, but remained with her for several days bringing her broth made of herbs and feeding her. They did not get sick and Weegibance grew stronger.

After a week or so, certain that they would not become contaminated by the dread smallpox and confident that Weegibance had recovered, the men took the old woman home. One of the elderly men married Weegibance.



CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to harmful or dangerous situations that might affect others |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weegibance was a grandmother, member of Leech Lake Ojibwe. • Smallpox came to Weegibance’s village; most of the people were soon dead. • Later, two men find Weegibance alone and unconscious on an island, where she has gone to prepare for her own death after all of her community have died. • She wakes up to find them cooking a meal nearby. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weegibance takes all of the survivors, including the sick, out on the land. They avoid all other people, taking care not to draw attention to themselves. • Weegibance feeds and cares for her people, alleviating their sufferings with medicine and burying the dead. She prepares for her own death by going to a small uninhabited island. • When she recognizes that strangers are nearby, Weegibance urges the men away, telling them she has smallpox. • The men, believing it is too late for them, stay and care for Weegibance. When they are confident she has recovered and they are not contaminated, the men take Weegibance [to their] home. One of them marries her. |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: All of the people Weegibance took from her village were “destined to die” (most people who contracted smallpox were dying). • Said: Weegibance took them away to “escape the place of death and to avoid contaminating others.” • Unsaid: Weegibance had a general duty (including to unknown persons) to reduce the risk of death and harm from the virus. This duty includes foregoing outside help, comforts, or conveniences (even camping without fires) if doing so reduces the chance that others will be put at risk. • Unsaid: It was not safe or healthy (on all four planes/quadrants of existence: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) to live or continue to die at the village site. |



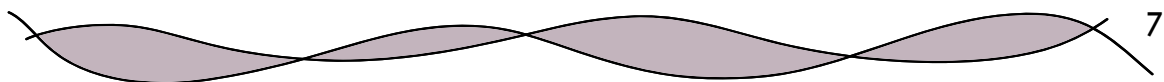
- Said: Weegibance upholds a responsibility of care and concern for all those who are sick.
- Unsaid: People remain fully deserving of material and spiritual care up to and including their deaths, even if they cannot be physically cured or 'saved'.
- Said: Weegibance continues to uphold her duty of care for others in her interactions with the strangers. This includes telling the men why she wants them to leave, rather than hiding that information.
- Unsaid: The men, who may otherwise have been acting lawfully to leave Weegibance, instead care for her. This is on the basis of supposing that their leaving would raise the risk of others getting sick (if they have caught the virus) but also upholds the same duty to care for others by tending to Weegibance (a duty not to 'give up'). The men have an ongoing obligation to care for Weegibance, and to bring her into their community, as hers is no longer available to her.

What inferences do you make to understand the story's decisions and reasoning?

- Weegibance is acting within kinship obligations, but also in a situation where 'normal' governance responses are not available. This is a sudden, existential crisis, where processes such as community consultation/collaborative decision-making may have to give way (although fundamental principles remain operative).

What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?

- Even in contemporary times, we do not outsource our legal obligations or surrender legal principles. For example, even though circumstances resulted in her survival, Weegibance was never trying to 'save herself' outside of a community context, and her actions were informed by how her community, by isolating itself, is part of a matrix of interdependent caring with other communities.
- This story emphasizes the importance of being cared for, to belong, to tend to needs irrespective of outcomes, BUT only insofar as doing so does not endanger those outside the circle of care/vulnerability that the situation requires. For example, Weegibance put herself at risk precisely to reduce the risk to others, and her actions of compassion and care were informed by keeping that risk to others as low as possible.
- The story highlights the acceptance of the death of the small self in the service of ongoing life.



BRACKETS &
QUESTIONS FOR
REFLECTION

1. Do you think everyone would have agreed with Weegibance's choice to remain isolated and avoid other communities? Did anyone want to stay in the village, or go into other encampments? How did/might Weegibance respond to conflicts around her authority and choices? Do you think this kind of 'emergency authority' has any relevance for decision-making today?
2. Is the marriage a way to adopt Weegibance into the men's community? Is the marriage a way to re-establish kinship connections that she has lost? Are there other options that can be used to become part of a new community or establish new kinship relations?



FAMILY DUTY

This version adapted from Basil Johnston, [Family Duty] in *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976) 73 at 73-75, online (pdf): *Archive* <<https://archive.org/details/ojibwayheritage00basi>>.

Basil Johnston introduces this story as follows:

“The Anishnabeg were, like other peoples, concerned about duties. What did a man owe to his community? What to his neighbour? What to his family? What to self? What forms of duty was he required to discharge? When? To what extent? What was the nature of duty? Were there natural duties from which there was no release? Does a promise exact a duty of fulfilment similar to that which arises from natural laws? To these questions, there was no final answer except further questions raised in stories.”¹⁹

Zhawano-Geezhig (Blue or Southern Sky) sensed that he would die from certain injuries that he had suffered accidentally while hunting. One night as his young family, consisting of his son, Cheebik (Root); daughter, Kayaushkonse (Little Seagull); an infant son, Myeengun (“He who makes strange noise” now commonly known as wolf) were seated near his pallet he said to his wife: “I will be gone soon. Look after the children.” Turning to his sons and daughter he gasped, “Look after your mother. Be good to her.” Amidst tears and sobs the children nodded. And within a few days that winter Zhawano-Geezhig died.

The spring of that year, the Mother, Weengushk (Sweet Grass) took sick. Daily she grew worse, eventually spitting blood. Knowing that she too, like her husband, would die, Weengushk spoke to her son who was about sixteen years of age. “Look after your sister and your little brother.”

“Yes, Mother,” murmured Cheebik.

The dying Weengushk extracted a similar promise from her daughter. Like her brother, Kayaushkonse solemnly undertook to look after her brothers.

Weengushk died leaving her two eldest children to look after Myeengun, an infant of two.

For a while the family of sister and brother lived quite amiably. But about two years after the death of their parents, Cheebik began staying away from home sometimes for days. At first, Kayaushkonse said nothing about these absences. However, when they interfered with the provision of food, she protested. Usually following her complaints Cheebik would improve, then would forget and neglect his brother and sister. It seemed that matters only got worse.

¹⁹ Basil Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) at 73, online (pdf): *Archive* <<https://archive.org/details/ojibwayheritage00basi>>.



One day after a particularly severe reprimand, Cheebik reluctantly and somewhat ashamedly confessed that he had fallen in love and intended to marry.

Hearing her brother's intentions, Kayaushkonse was dismayed and shocked. She angrily reminded her brother of his promise, "Don't you remember your promise to mother? Are you now going to break your promise and abandon us?"

To this accusation Cheebik had no reply except, "You and our little brother can live with us. I have told the woman I'm going to marry about us. She is willing to look after all of us."

Cheebik was interrupted by his sister who screamed at him between sobs, "You care more for a stranger than for us. You care more about yourself than for your mother. Go. Leave us alone. I will keep my promise; I will not break mine. Go!" As she finished, Kayaushkonse pushed her brother violently out the doorway.

Cheebik was gone. Somehow Kayaushkonse managed to feed herself and her little brother for the next three or four years. There were desperate times, but they survived.

One evening Kayaushkonse was cooking a meal when a young man emerged from the forest. Since she had lived all her life in a remote area and had seldom seen young men, she was frightened; she, therefore, said nothing. Seeing that the girl was alarmed, the young man explained that he had been out hunting and was returning to his village without having encountered any game. Kayaushkonse fed the young man saying that she didn't have much to offer him. After the young man, Meegwun (Feather) had eaten, he thanked Kayaushkonse and then left.

A few days later Meegwun returned, gave Kayaushkonse some venison which she cooked. But he did not remain. The next day, the young man came back with more food. Thereafter, Meegwun came regularly every few days to bring meats and fishes of all kinds.

Gradually, Kayaushkonse overcame her bashfulness and began to talk to Meegwun telling him about her parents, her brother, her promise, and her circumstances. Meegwun replied that he had heard about them.

As Meegwun's visits became even more frequent and equally pleasant, Kayaushkonse realized that she was falling in love. It was pleasant, yet not entirely welcome. Against her stronger sentiments, she attempted to discourage him by saying to him one day, "You mustn't come again."

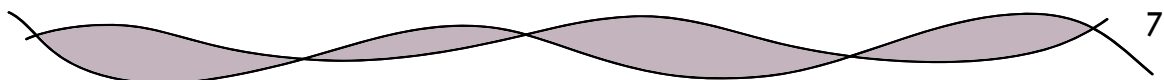
Meegwun was hurt, but he declared to the girl, "I love you. I want you as my wife."

"I cannot. Not now. I must look after my little brother as I promised my mother. He comes first," said Kayaushkonse.

"We can look after your brother; you can still live up to your promise," replied Meegwun.

"Much as I have come to love you, I cannot betray that promise. Can you not wait?" Kayaushkonse almost pleaded.

Meegwun was not easily dissuaded.



“You have an obligation to yourself too. You owe yourself a life. But your brother has no corresponding duty. When he is old enough to leave, he will leave. Where will you be then? What then?” asked Meegwun.

Kayaushkonse could not get Meegwun out of her mind, nor his words. For several days, she sat disconsolately in her lodge to be interrupted occasionally by her little brother who asked, “Why are you sad?”

Alternately, Kayaushkonse resented and pitied him, taking her brother in her arms or turning her back to him.

Early one morning, while her brother was still sleeping, Kayaushkonse gathered up her belongings and skipped out of the lodge.

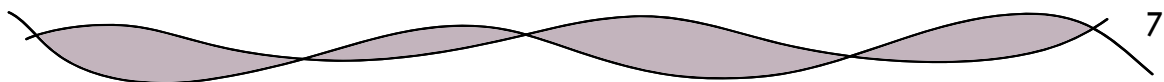
The next day she and Meegwun came back to the lodge to get her brother. To their dismay and horror, the boy was gone. They scoured the nearby forest, Myeengun had vanished.

Days of search followed, but were fruitless. Sadly Kayaushkonse and Meegwun gave up their search. Nevertheless, they came back from time to time more out of duty than out of any hope of finding the child. Kayaushkonse desponded.

Some six or seven years elapsed before Meegwun returned alone to the area where Myeengun had disappeared. He was stalking a deer when he heard someone call out his wife's name, “Kayaushkonse.” Meegwun froze in his tracks. Its voice was clear and querulous, “Kayaushkonse.” Meegwun knew the voice of Myeengun. He too called, “Myeengun” and his voice echoed through the forest. Then Meegwun heard the mournful howl that sent icy chills down his spine “Ooooooo.”

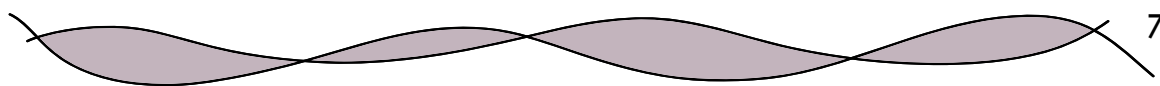
Meegwun edged over a small knoll. There in front of him sat a dark grey creature resembling a dog, but larger, his head pointing skyward all the while howling dismally and sadly. Meegwun rose, and as he did so, startled the animal who glanced at him before making off.

Meegwun knew that he had heard and seen Myeengun, “He who makes strange.” He did not tell his wife about it. But he told his people and his children about Myeengun, the wolf, the creature who does not trust man, but runs. Meegwun used to say, “When you hear a wolf howl, remember that he is warning his brothers and sisters of the presence of man and to beware.”

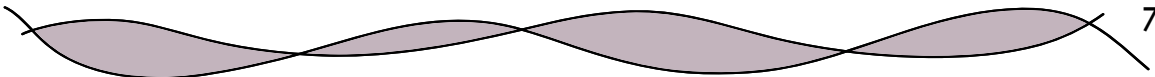


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to uphold caregiving responsibilities when kinship roles change |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family with three children (two adolescents and one infant) suffers through a number of tragedies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First the father, Zhawano-Geezhig (Blue or Southern Sky), slowly dies from hunting-related injuries. ○ The next spring, the mother, Weengushk (Sweet Grass) becomes ill and dies. • For about two years, the older children look after their young brother and each other. Then the eldest, Cheebik (Root) begins staying away for longer and longer times, and then for good. • Later, the sister, Kayaushkonse (Little Seagull), who has been raising the young child Myeengun (Wolf) by herself, meets a young man, Meegwun (Feather). Eventually they fall in love, and Meegwun asks Kayaushkonse if they can marry. • Kayaushkonse leaves Myeengun alone one day (sleeping) to go look for Meegwun. When she and Meegwun return the next day, Myeengun is gone. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before dying, Zhawano-Geezhig tells his wife to look after the children, and the children to look after their mother. • Similarly, knowing she is dying, Weengushk speaks to her sixteen year-old son Cheebik, asking him to look after his siblings, and then asks Kayaushkonse to promise the same. • The children solemnly promise to look after each other. • When Cheebik's absences interfere with the family's sustenance, Kayaushkonse protests. Cheebik improves but then quickly forgets. • Eventually, Cheebik admits that he's fallen in love. • Kayaushkonse refuses Cheebik's offer for them all to live together with his new partner, and pushes him away. He leaves for good. • Kayaushkonse refuses Meegwun's offer of marriage, saying she does not want to break her promise to her mother to look after Myeengun. • Meegwun leaves, but tells Kayaushkonse that she also has an obligation to herself. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayaushkonse and Meegwun spend years looking for Myeengun. • Meegwun finally sees Myeengun as a wolf. He does not tell Kayaushkonse, but tells his people and his children about “the creature who does not trust man.” |
| <p>REASONS What’s behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: This story deals with difficult/ongoing questions about people’s responsibilities to each other within families, especially in times of loss and change. • Unsaid: Losses and changes are inevitable, and strong families are able to withstand these without sacrificing individual or collective well-being. <p><i>What inferences do you make to understand the story’s decisions and reasoning?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayaushkonse could have upheld her promise to take care of Myeengun while also following her love for Meegwun. Unsaid: It is not necessary to completely sacrifice ourselves in service of an ideal. <p><i>What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To parents: they are invested in children’s well-being, even after death. But surviving children, in accepting/upholding caregiving responsibilities (for siblings), need to be responsive to the needs of the present, which will affect how caregiving promises are kept. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does this story teach you about how to uphold caregiving responsibilities when kinship roles change? 2. How do you think this story speaks to the dangers of dialectical thinking (thinking something is all good or all bad) or holding too closely to ideals of how to act or be in relationship to others? 3. Do you think Kayaushkonse’s trauma at having lost her parents informed her response to the changes brought about by new relationships (Cheebik’s and her own)? How might families and communities (and other legal institutions) understand and respond to the role of trauma in unhealthy decision-making (such as, here, Kayaushkonse leaving Meegwun alone)? |



STORY OF REDFEATHER

This version adapted from Unknown, "Story of Redfeather" in Beatrice Blackwood "Tales of the Chippewa Indians," (1929) 40:4 Folklore 315 at 342-343.

There was a bad little boy called Redfeather. He lived with his great-grandfather. His great-grandfather taught him to shoot with his bow and arrows very skilfully. They lived in a nice village, and just a little way off there was a great big frog meadow. The old grandfather told Redfeather stories about the different ways of creatures.

Springtime came, and in the evenings the old lady frogs would croak and sharpen their knives to butcher the craw fish. Every day Redfeather would go out with his bow and arrow and shoot and kill all the frogs he could get, and the craw fish too. One day a heron came along and told little Redfeather that she would give him the best feather in her body if he would leave the frogs alone; she had a nest of young ones to feed, and he was wasting her food. Redfeather said,—“I wouldn't want your old dirty feathers. If you were an eagle I might have one of your feathers.”

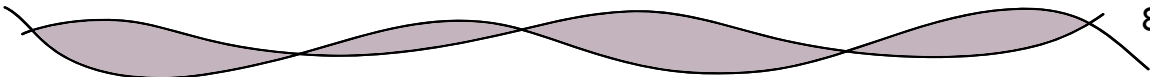
So the birds met together. There was an island that was heavily forested. On this island lived an aged wise owl. Each evening Redfeather would go out and refuse to come in to bed, and be noisy and disobey his great-grandfather. A crane and the owl and other birds were all complaining to each other about him, how he had scared away all the rabbits and small birds. They said he must be punished. The crane said that she was starving because he wasted the frogs, and killed the birds, and no one could live in peace.

So one evening the owl perched himself on a tree close to Redfeather's home, and said,—“Hoo Hoo!” Redfeather's great-grandfather said to him,—“Redfeather, come in, don't you hear?” But Redfeather said,—“I'll get the biggest arrow and shoot him.” Then great-grandfather said,—“The owl has large ears. He puts rabbits and other food in them. He might catch you too. You'd better come in and go to sleep.” But Redfeather went out and shot the owl, and while he was looking for the arrow the owl came down and picked him up and stuck him in his ears, and flew off with him. He flew across the lake to the island, and up into an old oak tree where the baby owls were. He put Redfeather down there, and told his babies, “When you get big enough to eat flesh you shall eat Redfeather.”

Then the owl flew away, and next day he told the crane and the other birds, and said, “When your babies are old enough we'll have a feast of Redfeather. I have him imprisoned in my oak-tree.” So Redfeather was kept a prisoner, and he cried, but he couldn't get down. And all the Indians knew Redfeather was lost. The great-grandfather asked all living beings to help him find Redfeather. At last they found him a prisoner in the owl's tree. Then the spirits told the great-grandfather to give a great feast and ask the owl to return his great-

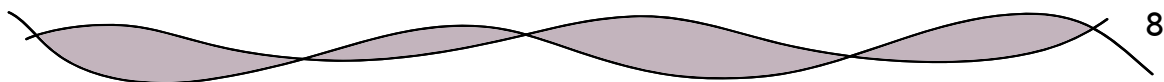


grandson. So he did, and Redfeather was returned to his great-grandfather, and he promised that he would never again misuse the food that Manabazoo had made for the birds.



CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to (a child's) conduct that threatens the well-being of others |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a “bad” little boy called Redfeather who lived with his great-grandfather in a nice village near a big frog meadow. • Redfeather's great-grandfather taught him bow-and-arrow skills, and also told him stories about the different ways of creatures. • Redfeather spent days killing all the frogs and crawfish he could, and, in the evenings, he would be noisy and refuse to come to bed. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One day, a heron came along and told Redfeather she would give him the best feather in her body if he would leave the frogs alone • Redfeather refused the Heron's feathers saying, “I wouldn't want your old dirty feathers. If you were an eagle I might have one of your feathers.” • The birds met together to decide how to respond. They determined that Redfeather “must be punished.” • Redfeather's great-grandfather warned him about how the owl could pick him up and take him, but Redfeather persisted in his disrespectful, harmful ways. • The owl took Redfeather, intending to feed him to his chicks and the other birds' young. • The great-grandfather asked all living beings to help him find Redfeather, and they found him a prisoner in the owl's tree • The spirits told the great-grandfather to give a great feast and ask the owl to return Redfeather. • The great-grandfather held a great feast and Redfeather was returned to him. • Redfeather promised he would never again misuse the food that Manabazoo had made for the birds. |



REASONS

What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?

- Said: Redfeather was killing “all of the frogs he could get, and the craw fish too.”
- Unsaid: Redfeather was taking not because he needed, but because he could.
- Unsaid: If we misuse the gifts we are given, there will be consequences. For example, Redfeather’s great-grandfather taught him to shoot very skillfully and he used this gift to harm the life around him until he was punished and forced to stop.
- Unsaid: Redfeather was wrong to refuse Heron’s gentle and generous offer to stop killing. His actions show no **respect, humility, or wisdom.**
- Said: The birds held a deliberative counsel to decide how to respond to the situation, which was impacting all the creatures (“the crane . . . was starving . . . no one could live in peace”).
- Said: Owl took Redfeather as punishment, but also to feed the birds who were affected by Redfeather’s actions. Redfeather was misusing the food that Manabazoo had made for the birds
- Unsaid: to free Redbird, the animals who were starved because of his actions needed to be properly fed/the consequences of wrongs of Redfeather had to be put back into balance.

What inferences do you make to understand the story’s decisions and reasoning?

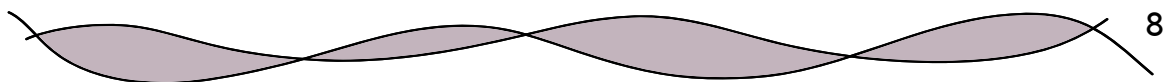
- There are a lot of procedures included in this story. For example, they held a feast to remedy the harm done by Redfeather.
- Teaching and learning is facilitated through experiencing consequences that are proportional to the harm done to Redfeather (would have been eaten by the birds he was starving).
- Owl as leader of the birds (like an Elder?)/decision-maker

What relationships, responsibilities, and/or rights are illustrated in this story?

- Unsaid: Redfeather’s great-grandfather was responsible (but not entirely) to make sure Redfeather behaved. Others (animals) took part in his punishment and eventual education/understanding.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redfeather was given multiple chances to improve his behavior/escalating consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When he was offered the feather, Redfeather responded with disrespect ○ When he was told by his great-grandfather to come inside, Redfeather refused and shot the owl. • Redfeather’s great-grandfather turned to those Redfeather had harmed to help him remedy the harm and regain his great-grandson. • This story illustrates the importance of having one family member that cares for a child/consistently looks after their wellbeing. |
| <p style="text-align: center;">BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you think Redfeather lived with his great-grandfather? Where do you think the rest of his family members were? 2. Why was the rest of the community not involved in Redfeather’s upbringing until he was taken away? 3. Do you think that escalating consequences offered to Redfeather were a fair way to respond to the harm he was causing to the birds and other animals? 4. What is the significance of the feast? Do these opportunities to repair harm and offer compensation or restitution take place today? What supports them or stands in their way? |



THE BAAGAATAA'AWA GAME THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "The Baagaataa'awa Game That Changed Everything," *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 13 at 13-17.²⁰

Usually, things are quiet in bboon.²¹ Mama is all rolled up warm in her white blanket in a deep rest after all that creating and then all that celebrating. Shhhhhhhh.

It's time for renewal. Makwa is dreaming, others are visiting Zhaawanong. The forest has a quiet, nearly empty feel to it.

Usually.

This year there was a kerfuffle. Instead of all quiet, it was all chirpy. Instead of snowflakes softly falling, feathers were flying like mini-tornadoes. Instead of helping, there was only snip-snapping.

Those Bineshiinyag were hungry, because they couldn't find enough to eat.

"Nbakade! Nbakade!" they sang.

"Nbakade! Nbakade!" they chirped.

"Nbakade! Nbakade!" they cawed.

"Nbakade! Nbakade!" they cried.

And then they started to argue.

"That's my seed."

²⁰ "Bagaataa'awe refers to the action of passing a ball back and forth and is the Nishnaabe name for lacrosse." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "The Baagaataa'awa Game That Changed Everything," *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 13 at 17.

²¹ "[B]boon is winter." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "The Baagaataa'awa Game That Changed Everything," *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 13 at 17.



“Those are MYYYY dinner.”

“GET YOUR OWN LUNCH!”

And then, that big fight got bigger and bigger. Until all the Bineshiinyag were arguing and fighting and being very big meanies. It was like a fire, and everyone was throwing more and more wood onto that fire and it was getting bigger and bigger. And then—it spread to the animals.

Amik started getting overly chewy.

Makwa started to be extra growly, even in her sleep!

Nika got a little too pokey with her beak.

Giigoonh...oh, that Giigoonh was just slippery, sliding out of all kinds of deals and promises.

Maybe that Gidigaa Bizhiw's claws get out and don't go back in, and pretty soon, everyone is all snip-snappy-yelly, and fur is flying everywhere.

Pretty soon, the Nishnaabeg notice, but not the big ones, not this time, not yet. Nope, those big ones don't notice when things go off balance at the beginning. They always notice too late. It was those little ones that noticed. Those little ones are always paying attention. They notice. Kids notice.

Those kids noticed, and they did the right thing. They told that old Nokomis, and that old Nokomis knew just what to do.

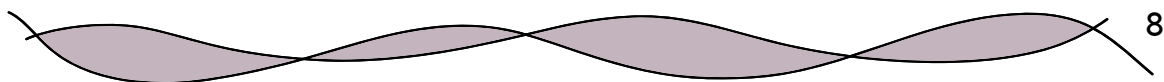
That old Nokomis says we're gonna have a meeting at noon at the big cedar tree. And so Pichi puts up a Facebook group and invites everyone, and everyone confirms they are coming, and then no one shows up at noon at the Chi'giizhikatig.

So, the next day, that old Nokomis says we're gonna have another meeting. This time a Talking Circle, and this time Pichi goes from house to house and tells everyone to meet at Chi'giizhikatig. This time everyone comes, and it starts out going good. Then Giigoonh starts talking, well, maybe kinda complaining, and maybe kind of going on and on and on and on, and, Bear, she get all mad and start yelling from the other side of the circle and soon fur is flying, and nobody listening, and Nokomis just leaves.

The next day, that old Nokomis tries ceremony. She gets everyone all lined up by the Chi'gizhiikatig, but, just as she's lighting the smudge, Nika says it's her turn to be shkabewis, but Amik and Gidigaa Bizhiw also think it's their turn, and pretty soon fur is flying and nobody is listening, and Nokomis lights the smudge by herself, but no one is even left for the ceremony.

The fourth day, Nokomis decides everybody needs to run off some steam. “Everybody meet me at noon at the big gizhiikatig,” she say, “because it's gonna be all fun and games, and there is a prize.”

Well, everyone likes a prize, so everyone shows up.



That old lady split the group into two teams. Animals on one side. Birds on the other.

Only Pakwaanaajinh is left standing by the gizhiikatig.

Nokomis tell the birds, Bat is on their team.

“Bat can't be on our team because she has fur,” Bineshiinyag say.

Nokomis tell the animals, the bat is on their team.

“Bat can't be on our team because bat has wings,” Animals say.

Nokomis tell the birds the bat is on their team.

The birds say, “That bat is too tiny and way too tired, and she has that baby bat that is always screaming, and she has to spend ALL of her time nursing that little guy just to keep him quiet.”

Nokomis takes a deep breath.

Fur just about to fly again, when Waawaashkesh gets the animals together. She tells them that Bat might just be useful, because she can echolocate things in the dark and because she can fly, and, plus, they don't have to put her on the field, she can just sit on the bench.

So the animals agree. Even Makwa. The game starts.

Bat hangs upside down under the tree by the bench nursing her little batling.

The first day the game doesn't go so well. A little too rough. Nokomis gets tired blowing her whistle all the time, and there is so much pushing and shoving that no one even hears her whistle.

Also, no one even gets close to the net—0–0.

The second day goes better, only a few scuffles in front of the net—0–0.

The third day, everyone getting a little tired. Still 0–0.

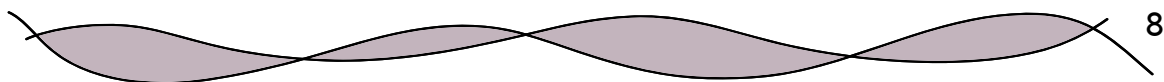
People starting to loose interest a bit. Amik start sneaking off to her lodge when no one looking.

The fourth day, everyone starts wondering why they're playing. Everyone so tired they forget what the fight is about.

By sundown, it is looking like the game might never end.

All this time, Bat been nursing her baby, hanging under that tree. And on that fourth day at sundown, out of the corner of her eye, she sees something coming towards her.

You know how mamas have super powerful peripheral vision?



You know how mamas have super-fast reaction times?

Well, that bat just kept nursing her baby with one wing. With the other, she stretched out way below her head and caught that ball.

And then she tucked that nursing baby under her wing and held onto that stick and flew like the wind to right in front of the birds' net, and she fired that ball right between the goalposts.

And the crowd erupted with cheers. And the animals came running to congratulate her, and that baby bat just kept right on nursing away. And those Bineshiinyag come and congratulate her too, because they so happy that the game is finally over.

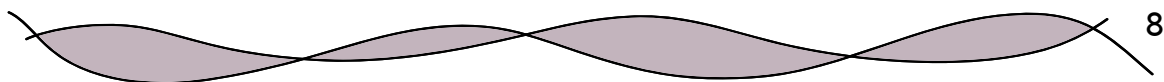
Then Bineshiinyag go and have a big meeting with Nokomis at the chi-gizhiikatig. They meet with Nokomis because it had become their responsibility to solve the food shortage, a very big responsibility.

By the light of that big Nokomis-Giizis, the Bineshiinyag decide that those that can fly to visit their friends in the Zhaawanong will do so every dagwaagin. In the spring they will return to Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogaming, and it has been that way ever since. They're excited for their adventure. The ones that will stay are happy too, because they will have enough food.

Everybody is happy.

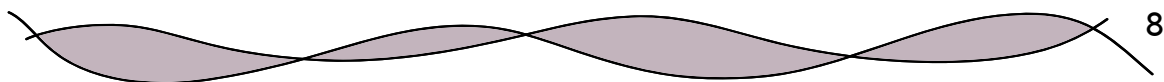
Even Nokomis.

Actually, especially Nokomis, because all her children are happy and healthy—and nothing is better than that.

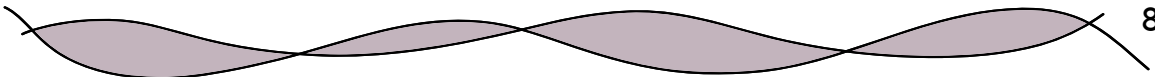


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to community/family conflicts, especially in the context of scarcity |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The animals are all hungry because it is biboon (winter) COLD! • They start to argue and this argument spreads to all the other animals. • The kids notice, and tell Nokomis. • Nokomis calls a meeting on Facebook, but nobody comes even though they say they will. • Nokomis calls a talking circle. Everyone comes, but then fur is flying and nobody is listening. • Nokomis tries again with ceremony, but an argument starts over who will be ascaabewis (helper). Fur starts to fly and Nokomis lights a smudge by herself. • Nokomis invites everyone for fun and games and there is a prize. The game is between birds and animals. • Nobody wants pakwaanaaiyinh (bat) because she's small, has fur and wings, is tired from nursing, and her baby is always screaming. • Waawashkesh (deer) says bat is useful because she can echo-locate in the dark, fly, and sit on the bench • Game starts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Day 1 – a little rough – 0:0 ○ Day 2 – few scuffles – 0:0 ○ Day 3 – a little tired – 0:0 (Amik starts to sneak off) ○ Day 4 – they are so tired they forget what they are fighting about |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The kids tell Nokomis. • Nokomis tries several ways to get the community together without fighting. Eventually, she organizes the game. • Bat (who is an in-betweenner in the contest between the birds and animals) ends up winning the game for the animals. Everyone is happy the game is finally over. • Final decision: The Bineshiinyag (birds) meet with Nokomis and it is decided that the birds will fly south every winter. |



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| <p style="text-align: center;">REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: Why did the kids tell Nokomis? They know Nokomis has the authority/knowledge. • Said: Why did the birds have the meeting with Nokomis at the end and decide to fly south for the winter? Because it was their responsibility. • Why is it the birds' responsibility? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unsaid: It could be argued that the birds need to leave because they are able to. ○ Unsaid: The birds role in distribution of seeds and how food is created. ○ Said: The disagreement originated with the birds. • Communication and responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Said: Bat, the way she carries herself, shows the birds how she can care for the community while also meeting the needs of her dependent/child. ○ Said: Nokomis' other attempts to resolve the issue did not work (prior processes fail). |
| <p style="text-align: center;">BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are people like Nokomis brought into decision-making processes today? Is their knowledge and authority reflected in law and legal institutions? 2. Why do you think Bat scored the winning goal? Do you think Bat was underestimated? 3. Was the last decision (having the game) the "best decision"? Or, did they come to it because it was the next step in a continuum of decision-making? 4. Do you think the resolution of this conflict (some birds flying south) prevented future conflicts (such as food scarcity or starvation)? What are some creative problem-solving experiences you have had, in or between families/communities? |



THE STAR PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS WATCHING

This version adapted from Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Star People Are Always Watching,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 70 at 70-71.

A long, long time ago, Gwiiwzens²² was looking up at the sky at night and he noted a new anang.²³ It was very bright, and, as soon as he saw it, he ran and told his grandparents. His grandparents gathered all the Elders together, and they all agreed: there was a new anang in the sky. No one had ever seen it before.

Everyone had a lot of questions. What should we do? Is it a sign? Is it a message? Why is the new anang here? What has this anang come to tell us?

After a long discussion, the Elders decided to ask Migizi²⁴ to fly as high as she could, and when she is as high as she could possibly go, Migizi would ask that anang why she was here.

Migizi prepared for her big flight. She ate lot and lots of gigoonhag.²⁵ She got her nest in order, and then she left, flying higher and higher than she ever had. She stopped and rested on the tallest mountain in the land. Then she flew higher.

When she couldn't fly any more, she called out, “Shki Anang, why are you here? What do you want?”

Shki Anang answered, “I have been watching the Nishnaabeg for many moons now. They are so happy. They are so gentle with their children. They have great respect for their Elders. I love how they all work together and take care of each other. I want to come and live with them.”

“Miiigwech,” said Migizi. “I will take your request back to my people.”

²² “[G]wiiwzens (Gwiiwizens) means a boy.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Star People Are Always Watching,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 70 at 71.

²³ “[A]nang is a star.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Star People Are Always Watching,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 70 at 71.

²⁴ “[M]igizi is a bald eagle.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Star People Are Always Watching,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 70 at 70-71.

²⁵ Gigoonhag means fish.



When Migizi returned to Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogaming, he told the people what Shki Anang had said. Everyone listened very carefully. After Migizi was done relaying the message from Shki Anang, the people went back to their families to discuss what she had said.

Soon, they all agreed that it would be a good idea for Shki Anang to come and live amongst them. They thought maybe the mountain would be a good place for her to live.

Migizi told Shki Anang the good news, and she came down out of the sky to make her home on the mountain. She could sure see what the Nishnaabeg were doing, up so high on that mountain, but she longed to hear their voices. She still felt lonely for them. Shki Anang asked the people if she could move to the bush.

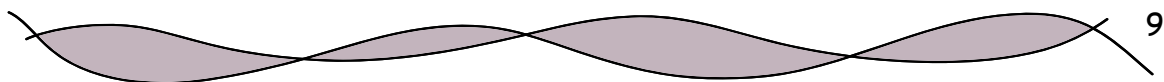
The Nishnaabeg went back to their families to discuss this new idea, and pretty soon everyone agreed. Shki Anang moved to the bush.

At first the bush was great. Shki Anang could certainly hear the Nishnaabeg, but, once the leaves came out on the trees, she couldn't see them. She went back to the Sky World to think about this problem. How was she ever going to be able to be with her beloved people? The Sky People listened to her problem and talked again until Dibik Giizis (night sun; moon) came up with the perfect idea.

Shki Anang descended back to the land of the Nishnaabeg, this time landing gracefully on the water. She spread her arms and legs out so she floated, and she became the most beautiful water lily.

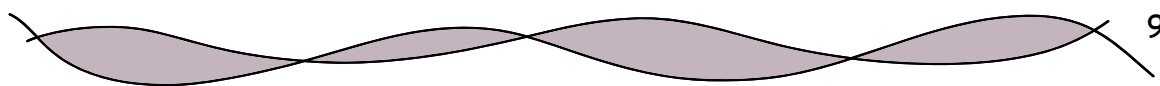
After that, the Nishnaabeg gave her a new name: Nibiish Waawaasgone,²⁶ Water Flower. Nibiish Waawaasgone reminds the Nishnaabeg of the beautiful Sky World and her people, and she reminds us to always live in a careful, gentle, and loving way. In her thankfulness, Nibiish Waawaasgone often gives her roots so that powerful medicines can be made.

²⁶ “Nibiish Waawaaskgone is a water lily.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “The Star People Are Always Watching,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 70 at 71.

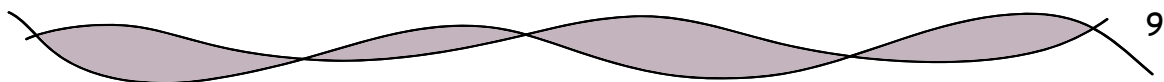


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to safely integrate new members into a family/community |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gwiiwizens noticed a new anang in the sky • As soon as he saw it, he ran and told his grandparents |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His grandparents gathered all the Elders together and they discussed the arrival of the new Anang. • The Elders decided to ask Migizi to fly as high as she could and ask the Anang why he was here. • Shki Anang told Migizi that she very much admired the Nishnaabeg and wanted to come live with them. • Migizi communicated this request to the people and they consulted again, agreeing that it would be a good idea for Shki Anang to come and live amongst them and that the mountain would be a good place for her to live. • Shki Anang asked the people if she could move to the bush. • The community discussed this new idea and everyone agreed. • Shki Anang moved to the bush. • Shki Anang returned to the sky world to think about how should would be able to be with her beloved people. • The Sky People listened to her problem and talked again until Dibik Giizis sent Shki Anang back down to the earth as a water lily. • The Nishnaabeg gave her a new name: Niibiish Waawaasgone or Water Flower. |
| <p>REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said: Shki Anang had been watching the Nishnaabeg for many moons and admired their happiness, gentleness, and ability to work together and take care of each other. • Said: Shki Anang came and lived on the mountain but still felt lonely. • Said: Shki Anang could not see the Nishnaabeg from the trees • Unsaid: community members must consent to the adoption of new members, including the process by which they are |



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| | <p>adopted. The community discusses and agrees to Shki Anang's gradual integration into the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Elders/respected community members should communicate and discuss whether to bring new members into the community at every stage. The Elders discuss what to do at every stage of Shki Anang's integration into the community. • Said: Shki Anang communicated with her birth family in the sky world about her adoption. • Unsaid: Those adopted into a community provide connections to their birth community. For example, Niibiish Waawaasgone reminds the Nishnaabeg of the beautiful sky world and her people and to always live in a careful, gentle, and loving way. • Unsaid: Those adopted into a community should contribute to that community in some way. For example, Niibish Waawasgone often gives her roots so that powerful medicines can be made. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This story can be understood as being about how new people can be brought into families and communities. What is this story telling you about Anishinaabeg principles and processes of welcome, adoption, or integration? 2. Who was involved in Shki Anang/Niibish Waawaasgone's move from the Sky-World to the Anishinaabe world? How did these consultations affect how she was able to move from one community to another? 3. Does Shki Anang/Niibish Waawaasgone maintain relations in the Sky-World? How? |



SHE HAD A BEAUTIFUL, SPECKLED DESIGN

This version adapted from Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 80-81.

A long, long time ago, some Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg were living on an island in Lake Ontario for the Niibin. They were fishing and collecting medicines. They spent time berry picking and swimming. They visited each other and conducted their summer ceremonies.

In the middle of this island was a beautiful, clear, deep lake. It was the most beautiful colour of blue, and it was always sparkling, even on cloudy days. The lake was full of trout, but the Nishnaabeg knew this lake was special, so they never ate the fish from the lake in the middle of the island. They only ate the fish from the big lake, Chi’Nibiish.²⁷

Sometimes, the Nishnaabeg needed to paddle to the mainland to visit their relatives or to get a different kind of food. One day, the families decided to go to the mainland, and everyone was excited to go, except for Kwezens.²⁸ She wanted to stay. Kwezens was an artist. She loved to bead beautiful patterns onto makizinan²⁹ and paint beautiful designs onto her clothes. She loved to sew new clothes for her family. So her family took this into consideration. They thought that maybe she’d like the time to dream some new designs or finish some of the projects she’d been working on.

After a long discussion, the family agreed that Kwezens was old enough to stay by herself. Before they left, Kokum³⁰ gently reminded Kwezens not to eat the fish from the lake in the middle of the island. Kwezens smiled and told Kokum she wouldn’t forget. So the people loaded their jimaan³¹ and set off for the mainland.

Kwezens felt free. She had the entire day to herself. Would she swim? Would she lie on the beach? Would she fish? Would she sew?

²⁷ “Chi’Nibiish is the Mississauga name for Lake Ontario.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

²⁸ “[K]wezens (ikwezens) is a girl.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

²⁹ “Makizinan are moccasins.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

³⁰ “Kokum is another name for Grandmother.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

³¹ “[J]imaan are canoes.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

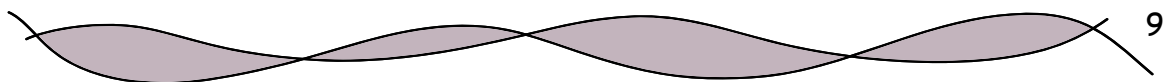


Kwezens also felt curious, very curious. So curious that she couldn't follow Kokum's reminder. So she went to the lake with her spear, and she caught one of the lake trout. She cleaned it and roasted it on the fire, and then she ate it.

When her family returned, they looked everywhere for Kwezens. They found her spear and her beading tools, but they couldn't find her.

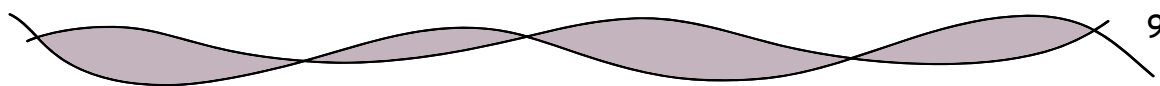
After it was clear that Kwezens was gone, Kokum went to the lake in the middle of the island. She put some semaa³² into the water. She prayed and sang for Kwezens. She put a little bit of food into the lake, and soon a little trout appeared. But this trout wasn't like the others. She wasn't plain. She had a beautiful, speckled design all over her body. Beautiful red dots surrounded by yellow haloes, just like the clothes Kwezens has been wearing. Before long, the lake was full of beautiful, speckled trout with red dots and yellow haloes, and before long, the beautiful, speckled trout found other lakes to live in too, and they were always happy to feed the Nishnaabeg.

³² “[S]emaa (asemaa) is tobacco.” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “She Had a Beautiful, Speckled Design,” *The Gift is in the Making: Anishinaabeg Stories* (Winnipeg: Highwater Press, 2013) 80 at 81.

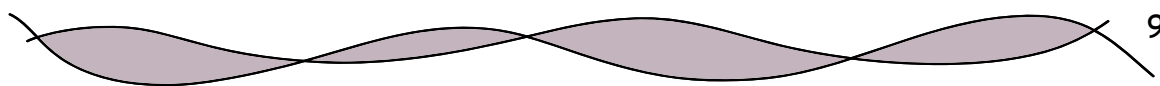


CASE BRIEF

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| <p>ISSUE</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to respond to a young person's choices (desire for autonomy) |
| <p>RELEVANT FACTS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg are living on an island in the middle of Lake Ontario for the summer. • The families need to go to the mainland. • Kwezens wants to stay behind. • In the middle of their island was a beautiful, clear, and deep lake. • The Nishnaabeg knew this lake was special, so they never ate the fish from the lake in the middle of the island. • Kwezens was an artist. • She loved to bead beautiful patterns onto makizanan and paint beautiful designs. |
| <p>DECISION/ RESOLUTION (How) Is this issue resolved? Who makes the decision?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a long discussion, the family agreed that Kwezens was old enough to stay by herself. • Before they left, Kokum gently reminded Kwezens not to eat the fish from the lake in the middle of the island. • Kwezens went to the lake and caught one of the lake trout and then ate it. • When her family returned, they looked everywhere for Kwezens but could not find her. • After it was clear she was gone, Kokum went to the lake in the middle of the island, and put semaa into the water, praying and singing for Kwezens. • She put a little bit of food into the lake and a trout with a beautiful speckled design like Kwezens' clothes appeared. |
| <p>REASONS What's behind the response(s)? Are reasons explained (said or unsaid)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: The individual, and their gifts and desires, are accounted for in family decision-making process. For example, the family considers Kwezens' age and that she might want time to focus on her art. • Said: Kwezens felt too curious to follow Kokum's reminder. • Said: Before long, the lake was full of beautiful speckled trout with red dots and yellow haloes, then they spread to other lakes and they were always happy to feed the Nishnaabeg. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsaid: Sometimes, respecting our children’s increasing autonomy means accepting separation and transformation. For example, Kwezens transformed into a fish. • Unsaid: Even when children change forms, they still have an obligation to provide for their communities in some way. For example, Kwezens and her relations continue to provide food for the Anishinaabeg after she transforms into a fish. |
| <p>BRACKETS & QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This story can be understood as being about how other relations—and the wider community—respond to a young person’s desire for more autonomy. Do you agree? What lessons do you take from how Kokum responded to Kwezens? 2. How do you think Kokum would have explained Kwezens’ transformation to her family? How do you think they would have responded? 3. Why do you think the beautiful speckled trout were willing to feed the people after Kwezens transformed into one, but not before? Did this create obligations between the two communities? 4. Do the experiences in this story make you think of anything regarding your work or own life? |





**INDIGENOUS LAW
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