

## CHAPTER 4 —The Great Flood

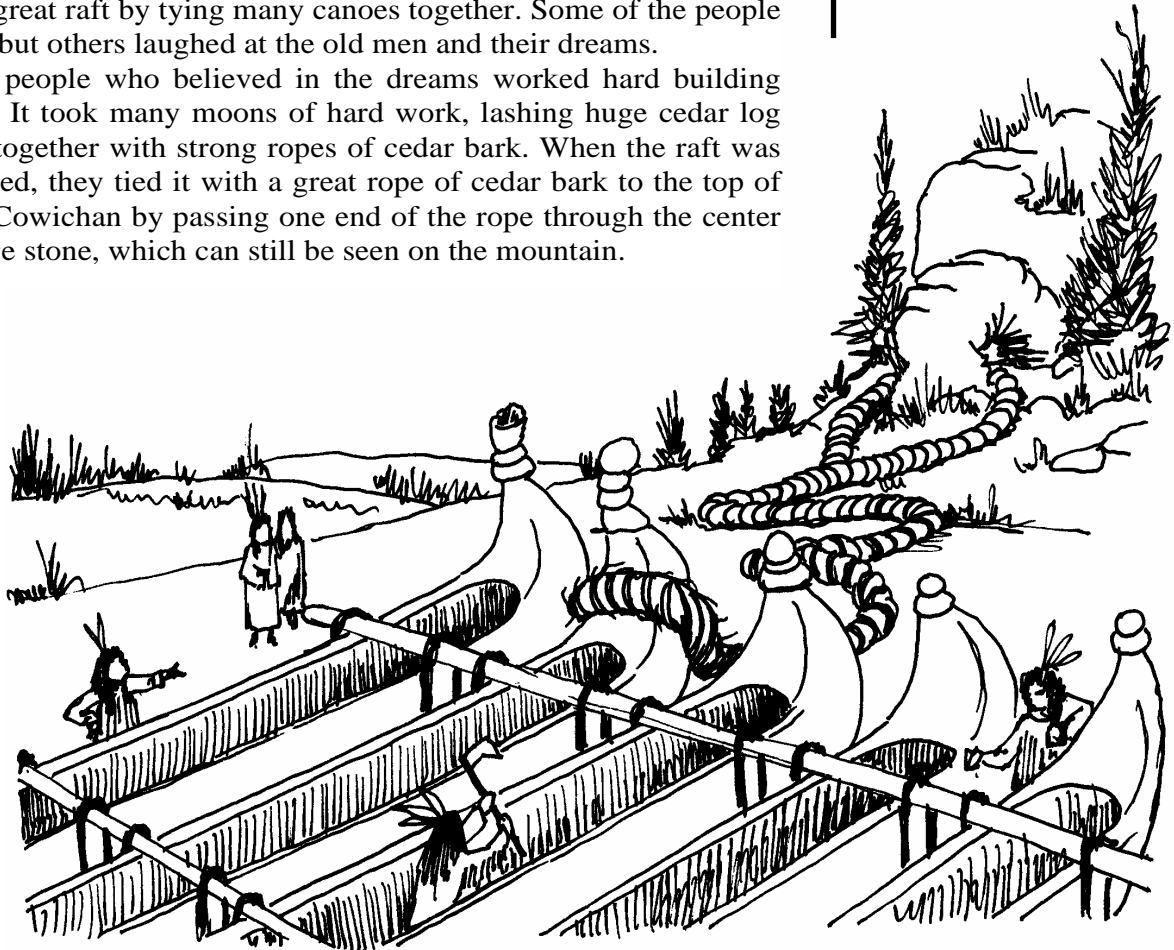
*Long before missionaries arrived in the New World, the Indians had ancient legends of a great flood, similar to the story of Noah. This is the one the Cowichan tell.*

In ancient times, there were so many people in the land that they lived everywhere. Soon hunting became bad and food scarce, so that the people quarreled over hunting territories. Even in those days the people were skilled in making fine canoes and paddles from cedar and clothing and baskets from its bark.

Wise old men could see the future in their dreams, and there came a time when they all had similar bad dreams that kept coming to them over and over again. The dreams warned of a great flood.

The wise men who told each other about their dreams were troubled. They all had dreamed that rain fell for a long time, or that the river rose, causing a great flood so that all of the people were drowned. They were much afraid and called a council to hear their dreams and decide what should be done. One said that they should build a great raft by tying many canoes together. Some of the people agreed, but others laughed at the old men and their dreams.

The people who believed in the dreams worked hard building the raft. It took many moons of hard work, lashing huge cedar log canoes together with strong ropes of cedar bark. When the raft was completed, they tied it with a great rope of cedar bark to the top of Mount Cowichan by passing one end of the rope through the center of a huge stone, which can still be seen on the mountain.



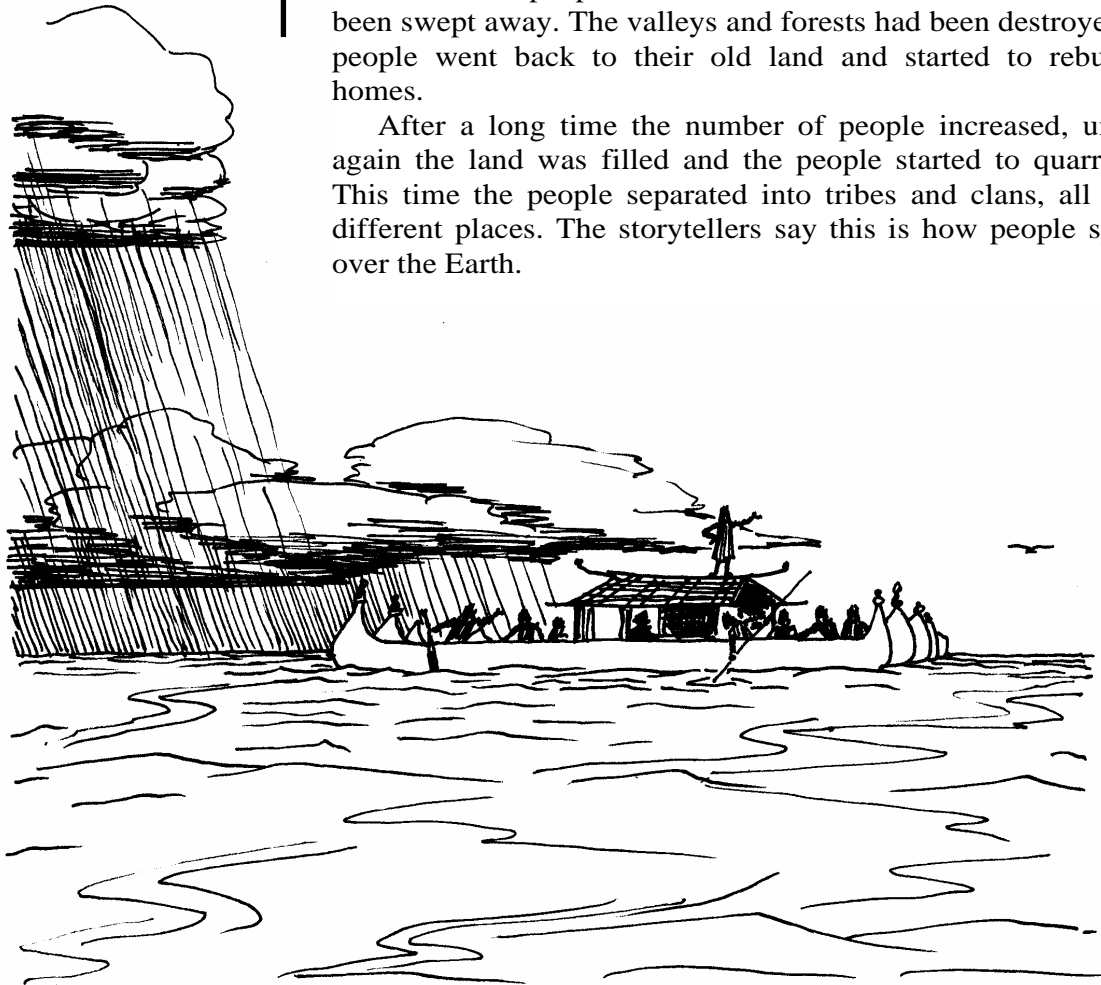
During the time the people were working on the raft, those who did not believe in the dreams were idle and still laughed, but they did admire the fine, solid raft when it was at last finished and floated in Cowichan Bay.

Soon after the raft was ready, huge raindrops started falling, rivers overflowed, and valleys were flooded. Although people climbed Mount Cowichan to avoid the great flood, the mountain, too, was soon under water.

But those who had believed the dreams took food to the raft, and they and their families climbed into it as the waters rose. They lived on the raft many days and could see nothing but water. Even the mountaintops had disappeared beneath the flood. The people became much afraid when their canoes began to flood, and they prayed for help. Nothing happened for a long time; then the rain stopped.

The waters began to go down after a time, and finally the raft was grounded on top of Mount Cowichan. The huge stone anchor and heavy rope had held it safe. As the water gradually sank lower and lower, the people could see their lands, but their homes had all been swept away. The valleys and forests had been destroyed. The people went back to their old land and started to rebuild their homes.

After a long time the number of people increased, until once again the land was filled and the people started to quarrel again. This time the people separated into tribes and clans, all going to different places. The storytellers say this is how people spread all over the Earth.



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## **How Well Did You Read and Understand the Story?**

*Hint: Many of the questions you will be asked answer are opinion questions, meaning they may have more than one answer. When you see this type of question, it is important to support your opinion with quotes or ideas from the text.*

1. What does this legend explain?
2. Why did people begin to quarrel?
3. When they finished the raft, how did they tie it?
4. Find two locations in the story that still exist today. (They are both in Canada.)
5. What is the significance of the raft in the story?
6. What about you? Would you be among those who laughed at the old men and their dreams or among those who helped build the raft? Why?
7. Choose one descriptive paragraph and one non-descriptive paragraph and copy them. Compare and contrast the two. Be sure to explain what makes them descriptive or non-descriptive.
8. Do you think the people learned their lesson? Why or why not?
9. You love the legend you've read and can't wait to tell somebody about it! Write a letter retelling the story in your own words. (Maybe you will choose to mail it!)

**Critique the ending. Do you think the author should have ended the story differently? Maybe you think a different lesson should be taught. Write a new ending and explain why yours is better.**