

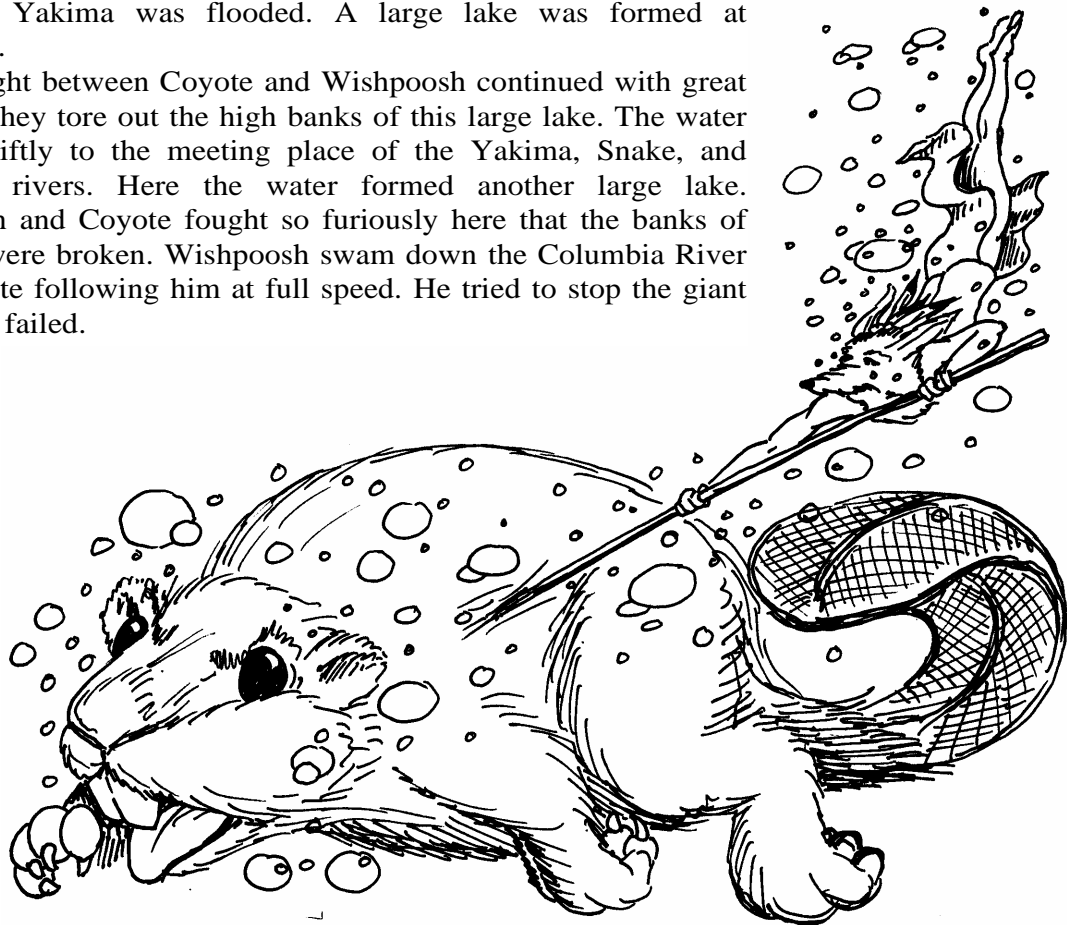
CHAPTER 7 —The Beginning of the Tribes

In the early days of the world, Wishpoosh, the giant beaver, lived on Lake Cle-el-lum. It was a beautiful body of water and full of fish. The animal people wanted to fish there, but Wishpoosh killed them as fast as they came near. He would drag the animal people into the water and drown them.

Coyote made up his mind to kill Wishpoosh. He fastened a sharp spear to his wrist with a stout cord and began to fish in the lake. After a time, Wishpoosh attacked him. Coyote speared the beaver with all of his might. Wishpoosh plunged to the bottom of the lake and dragged Coyote along with him. Coyote fought so desperately with Wishpoosh that the banks of Lake Cle-el-lum were torn out. The water surged through the break and then plunged through the mountains and down the canyon. The water rushed madly into the broad Kittitas Valley and formed another lake.

Wishpoosh and Coyote struggled so hard that they destroyed the banks of the new lake. Then the waters surged madly into the basin of the Cowiche, Naches, and Atahnum. The waters made a bigger lake, and Yakima was flooded. A large lake was formed at Toppenish.

The fight between Coyote and Wishpoosh continued with great fury, and they tore out the high banks of this large lake. The water rushed swiftly to the meeting place of the Yakima, Snake, and Columbia rivers. Here the water formed another large lake. Wishpoosh and Coyote fought so furiously here that the banks of this lake were broken. Wishpoosh swam down the Columbia River with Coyote following him at full speed. He tried to stop the giant beaver but failed.



At last Coyote and Wishpoosh reached the ocean breakers at the mouth of the Columbia River. The beaver killed salmon and ate them. Coyote saw that Wishpoosh had grown stronger.

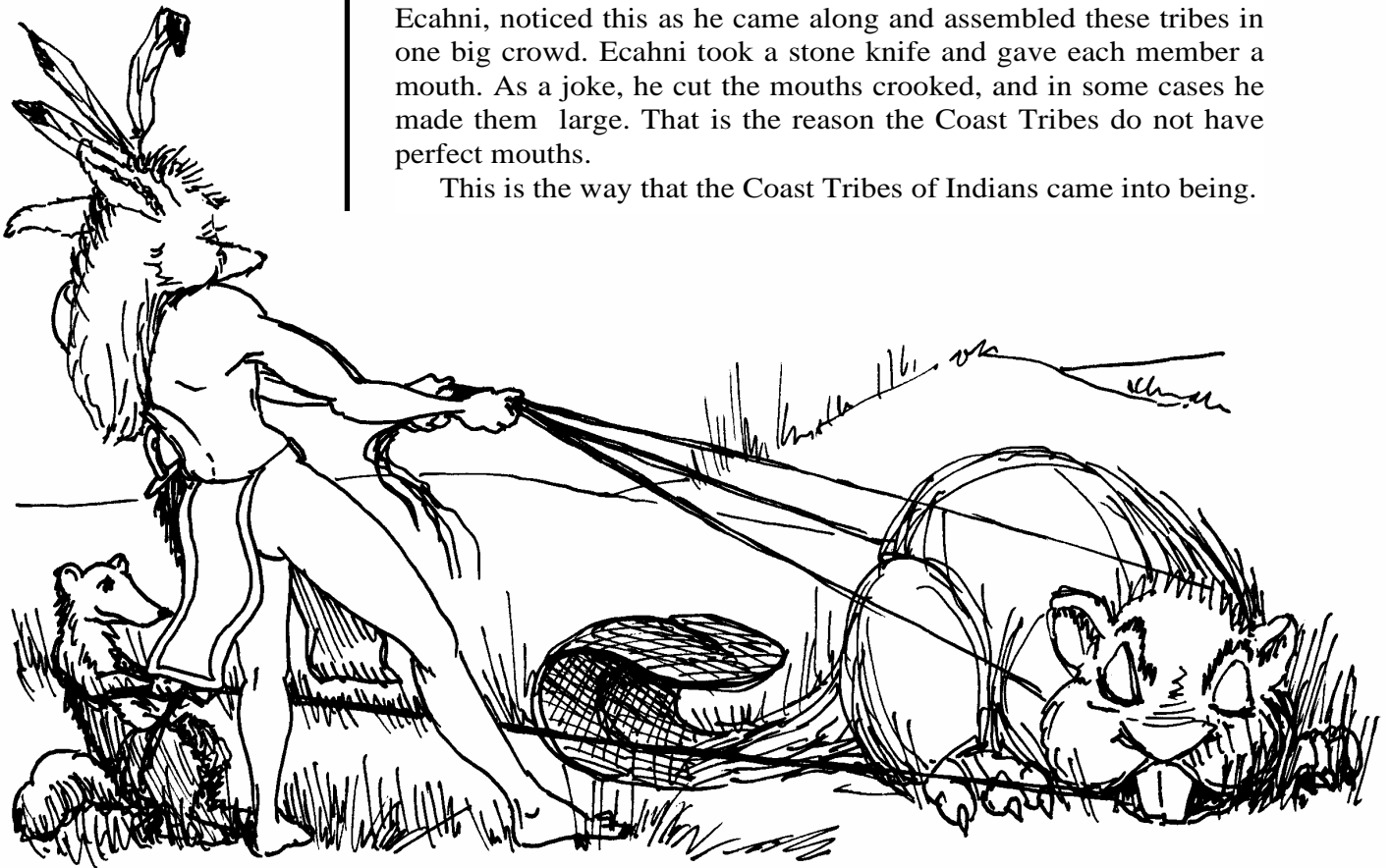
Now Coyote was the wisest and most cunning of animals. He changed himself into a tree branch and floated toward Wishpoosh. Wishpoosh swallowed the tree branch. Coyote changed himself back into an animal again. He took his spear and cut the sinews inside of Wishpoosh. Thus, the beaver died.

It had been a hard day, and Coyote was terribly tired. He asked Muskrat to assist him. Coyote and Muskrat towed the giant beaver to the shore, cut up the body, and threw the pieces over the land. Coyote made the Nez Percés out of the head of Wishpoosh. They were wise in council. He made the Cayuses out of the arms of the beaver. They were powerful with the bow and the war club. Next, he made the Klickitats, the wonderful runners, out of the legs of the beaver, and the Yakamas out of the ribs. He then made the Chinooks, a race of short, fat people, out of the stomach of the beaver.

At last, Coyote had only the hair and blood of Wishpoosh left. He threw these far up the valley to the east. At once they became the Snake River Indians, a tribe of war and blood. In this way, Coyote created the tribes.

Coyote came back up the Columbia River, but he forgot to give the Chinooks and the other coast tribes any mouths. The God, Ecahni, noticed this as he came along and assembled these tribes in one big crowd. Ecahni took a stone knife and gave each member a mouth. As a joke, he cut the mouths crooked, and in some cases he made them large. That is the reason the Coast Tribes do not have perfect mouths.

This is the way that the Coast Tribes of Indians came into being.



How Well Did You Read and Understand the Story?

Hint: Stories can be written with dual purposes. This particular legend is written to entertain and to inform. Practice distinguishing which parts are entertaining and which are informative as you read.

1. Why did Coyote decide to kill Wishpoosh?
2. How was the lake in Kittitas Valley formed?
3. List all of the Indian tribes that Coyote and Muskrat created from the beaver.
4. What do you think is the lesson of this legend?
5. What effects did Beaver and Coyote have on the land?
6. How does the author move the story to different locations? In other words, what is happening as the characters move from place to place?
7. Explain the stereotypes that the author creates. Use specific examples.
8. Do you think you have some false stereotypes of people? (Stereotypes are usually not cruel. They lump certain types of people into a category.) Explain a few stereotypes you have and how you think you developed them. *Example: I've always assumed that all Chinese people eat with chopsticks, but I guess that is because of the restaurants I have been to and the movies I watch.*
9. Assume for a moment that the stereotype, "Coast Tribes do not have perfect mouths," is true. Create an explanation that is more logical than Coyote's.
10. The author presents a large amount of information in this text. How does the organization help or hurt your understanding?