

Title: 0136-Our Voices-Legend of the Giant Skunk
Bird Number: 1013
Recorder: Louis Bird
Date Recorded:
Transcriber: Kathy Mallett
Date Transcribed: March 6, 2003
Language: English
Culture: Cree (Omushkego)
Transcript: Proof

Ok, what I am going to do is, I am going, I am going to censor the giant skunk, I am going to tell that first because there is two major part to it, there's what's on in the first part and then the giant skunk is eliminated and then on their own the other animals fits, fits on, and then finally even that part is not the end. About the incubinx, it start out with a mixture of a human, its very hard to understand when the human existence but in the giant skunk story there is no human, now lets experience about this thing.

Once we listen to these ones, then we'll be able to, then we will be able to experience the true value of the legends, storytelling.

Ok, I am going to start with the giant skunk, censored, and these legends can start anywhere there is no ridged restriction or anything. How do you begin a legend? In our language its very simple and its very very automatic, so I could say, we could start off with the weasel.

Weasel was hunting by himself in the winter. He had travelled far during the day. Finally towards evening it was a time for him to turn towards home, home ward direction. Actually weasel didn't travel straight as he always does, always following the creek and looking for the places where he can find the mice, what he is after. Sometimes he follows the creek to find small minnows or even fish. A big fish of which he eat for his diet. So, therefore his his trail, a hunting trail is not straight, it wonders off into the creeks and sometimes across to the next creek. And then always maintaining his home ward direction.

Finally, it was one of those days that he has been busy hunting, which was not very successful. He was not, he didn't hunt very well, he was not lucky. He had this meal very lightly yes, but he would rather take something home. So he carried his his catch on his back, and it was towards evening that he finally decided to to head home. Taking a short cut exactly where his home is located. So he took off towards home, days get shorter. Finally the sun set, just after the sun set, just before it gets dusk, he saw a trail that was ahead of him.

He knows its a large animal trail, a track. So in his training he was told always to be careful which track that he is going to cross. To make certain first that it doesn't belong to the giant skunk. So his thought hit him right away. So he decided to go sneak around, look at the trail from distance, until finally he can he was very certain it was the giant skunk. And its such a day that I have to cross his track, because the law is there, that if anyone wants to survive no one should ever cross giant skunks trail or the track.

So being that he was already tired and some distance to cover yet. And its already sunset he decided to do the next best thing. Rather than go back go back, and go way back of his track because it is so far distance. He knows that the skunk doesn't go wonder off very far from his den. He could have done that easily just to look from the side, and follow where it ends, because of his tired condition he just didn't want to fool around. So he decided to go under it, hoping that giant skunk is not going to find out that he has crossed his trail. Anyway, down he goes under the snow, crawl right down to the grassy bottom where there is less snow. But as he get right under the track, usually the snow when you step on the snow, you crush it down to the ground, and it freezes hard right to the ground.

In that case he encountered the hard crush rocks, rock I mean, snow not rock, right close to the ground, it's a hard frozen snow. I wanted to say to express the Cree version of this condition, that's way I said rock, I said the rock type hard snow. So anyway, he went right under, and he dig causing him to dig part of this hard crush snow. Hoping that you know that the giant skunk is not going to find out anyway.

So we know that the weasel is very small, and small body and he will dig on, measure about one inch hole, right to the bottom of the ground bottom of the snow. So the giant skunk shouldn't able to detect anything at all, that's what he believes. So he crawled under the snow quite a ways, after he passed this crush hard snow, and then come up come up to the surface far enough where his trail is not going to be seen by a giant skunk. So off he went forgetting all this leaving this behind.

So he made it home later after dusk. He got there, and was very tired gave his, his catch to his wife and she prepared the food. And its so happen the next day he travels around again, and didn't go very far. But there were times when the man of male group of animals sat together and told stories about their hunting days. And it was this few days maybe, it was only the next day, not even in the evening, it was during the day that he mentioned he has crossed the trail of the giant skunk.

So he was just sort of asking the person he says, "Do you think it's possible the skunk would detect my crossing his trail under the snow?" So the the news travelled fast in this small, a small connective society of animals. So they carried the word across each other, and the say, "Well the weasel has crossed the skunks trail, and he is here with us, and surly the giant skunk is going to follow his trail, and he is going to follow ours, and surly we are going to be dead."

So, this mistake that the weasel have done spread across the communities of other animals. So they come to answer that the wise animals. So we just have to make a leave, we just have to move away. Hopefully the giant skunk will take him a little while to find out. But they are so certain by this time he must be making an effort to locate the trail, who ever crossed his trail. Because the animals that made certain that they would never cross his trail. Because they they avoided the area where this giant skunk was living, in the winter especially, it wasn't to bad in the summer, but in the wintertime.

So the weasel was sort of put on a hot seat. And he was told, "Why did you have to do that, you know it's easy for him to detect your trail in the winter. It would be all right if it was water, and wet ground he may have not found it, never the less it is too late now, we

must move away". So the decision of the elders, and wise animals decided to leave the area to avoid being slaughtered or whatever.

As the story goes, the giant skunk has a very powerful shamanistic powers. And which surpasses all the animals, and that's what they fear of him. Because there is nothing they can do to him, because he was the most feared animal there is. And there there was no way they could avoid it, they know for sure that he will find out eventually. He will track down the the intruder what ever he wants to control him.

The idea is that who ever cross his trail deserved to die, and that will be his meal, but we know that the skunk doesn't eat animals that that often, because he is more like an, more like an insect eater and vegetarian. But there are times, especially in the wintertimes, if he could get a hold of animals or anything, he will surely eat. And that's way it was dangerous to cross his trail in the wintertime. But anyway, after the decision was made by the by the other animals, they say, "We might as well just take off, we will head west to the mountains somewhere."

So they know the giant skunk is not the fastest animal there is, and besides that, they know he travels very slow. And usually prefer to travel on the smooth ground. Smooth ground and not the rough terrain. And so they decided to head west. Where there is mountain rocks and everything a lot of bad lands, so they took off. The following day some of them during the night took off. The whole family left the area, and as they go west they begin to be joined by all sorts of animals, squirrels, otters, they didn't mention about beaver, but they mention all the four legged animals who travel on the on the surface, in the winter time. Sure enough there was a packed trail, even the caribous jointed in and everything, wolverine, wolves, lynx, and all that stuff, and they all heading one direction.

And out of these groups there was a wolverine, was looked upon as a one of the wise person. And the caribous were looked upon as the most energetic animals who could break trail ahead of the herd. A herd of wild animals, and the smaller ones behind, even a mice even the mice family moved around, weasels, squirrels and everything that travels on wintertime. I think they even have a eagle, and a raven any any other kind of animals are in danger, so they said.

So it says, they move west, they approached the mountains, and high and valleys, rugged grounds. In hoping that whenever the giant skunk pass from the trail, that he would surely follow, and that he won't give up, regardless of his speed. The only hope was that, they would tire, they would tire him out eventually, and probably too weak to follow them, that was the hope for survival.

Now leaving off the group of animals who are heading out. Here was giant skunk in his in his home. At the moment of the evening, the weasel have touched his trail. The giant skunk was sitting on this home comfortably with his wife his family, and all of a sudden he feel by his shaman power that he's been touched, as if he touching his body, and even making him expression of it, he says "Yum somebody is touching my trail." And the wife of course is there and aware of what is happening. So he begin to wonder who would be crossing my trail, this time of the day.

So that means he surely has a meal coming up. If he can catch the animal who cross

his trail, because he's been trespassing just like somebody is asking to be killed to be eaten. As with this general term, but he says, "I will go look for it tomorrow", because it was too late already. He told his wife "I will look for it." So the skunk finally went to bed, but as usual the animals and humans always in those days, always being taught to leave early in the morning before sunrise to go hunting.

So what he did was he left before sunrise in the morning, and he went to back track his trail where he travels yesterday. Sure enough, just about at the end of his trail he saw, he went around he didn't see no track nothing what so ever, no trail. The only thing he saw was just a track of this spruce grouse, and some owl marks and those things like that.

And then he went home. He just couldn't understand how could he have made a mistake, because he is very sensitive, he's radar system is very keen. A radar system I mean his shamanistic power never fails him. Who ever crosses his tracks usually touch him right way, so that's why he wondered, why did I think that I, my trail has been crossed. So in in that afternoon as he was coming home, he didn't go very far so he was mystified, and he told his wife, why it was amazing, how could I be wrong.

So in those days the animals use to have a special ritual. A special way of doing things to reject or to reject their mistakes. So what he usually do is giant skunk, was he use to eat a certain kind of food, a certain way things that is cooked, so he would eat. And think that's re-taking his trail as if he would see it again. So he tried, I think he tried first, a snake, garden snake sort of thing. A small snake anyway, a small snake which has been smoked dried and cooked. So he asked his wife, "Can you cook that for me?", it used to work. So she went ahead and busy cooked this snake skin, smoke snake. So he he sat down to eat, and begin to back track in his mind.

He went out again, thought he know he went to check all over, couldn't find a thing. So he returned again in the afternoon and told his wife, "It's strange I still couldn't find the track, what could it be?" He knows it's not a large animal he knows it has to be under ground so he just couldn't find it. So he asked his wife, "Could you cook me that, a bull frog smoke, a smoked bull frog that you cooked for me that you prepared for me last fall." So she says, "Sure." So she went out and bring in a smoked frog hide its skin mostly, so she begin to cook. This kind of eating was supposedly a ritual for this purpose only he is the only one who would eat it. So she offered the the food and the meal to him and he begin to eat.

As he eat, sits as if he's not there. But he actually travelling on his track. As if he's looking back at it again, finally he pinpointed the area, pinpointed in his mind where is it all. So he went there, same day. That was the next day after the weasel crossed his track. So he went there and he knows how to look for it this time. After he finished eating he went back out the same day the same afternoon. Sure enough he went to pick out the spot and he had he had his axe, they say or his knife that he uses.

So he walked back and forth and cut snow on his track. And look at it, as he does, sure enough he found a small hole right at the bottom of his track, bottom of the ground just a small hole. And here was the hole which was made by this small animal. He follows it, and follows it, and finally come up to the surface, and this was the weasel. He says, "Ha,

Ha, I know I know there was.” So he says “That was yesterday they shouldn't be too far, shouldn't be too far.”

But he didn't go that day. That evening he went home tell his wife, and tomorrow he is going to follow. So it's more like a ritual he didn't really need all that. But because he's feared because he wants to full fill his status he has to do it. But he only expected to find weasel family at the end fortunately is wasn't so. The next day when he left he found the trail again. Followed it and finally found the campsite which has been left. And the weasel family has left.

And he follows it another camp site was there. And there was another animals jointed in, and by the end of the day there was a whole group of animals travelling towards westerly direction. There are found out. They have found that he would follow them. And he spend a night. The next day the same thing happened, by this time there was just the track was so wide, and packed that he was just travelling there, very easily towards west. And days passed and he kept following. He was getting weaker, he was getting hungry, because of all this travelling. But the animals seems to just, just to gain distance.

Finally after many many days, finally he reached the area where you could see the mountains of the west, seems to be hanging cloud. He knows they are going to go there. Follows them and follows them. Finally he reached the mountain region, began to climb up and down up again to the valleys. Sometimes he was to weak, to even have some cramps in his legs and he has to rest. So he knows those other animals must have the same problem. Especially the animals who have the smaller smaller young ones. So finally the the skunk is not the one who gives up easy because to full fill his status, I mean to maintain his status as the most fearsome animal he has to go.

Finally the animals, also now we begun the story of the animals. As soon as the animals reach the mountain region they begin to feel safe. Because they know by this time the skunk will be having a difficult time, and he will be tired just like them. And hopefully by this time, they may give up. He may turn back. But those who were in charge of this expedition or refuge, what ever this they have a radar system also. So the the old animals who have required the radar system scan the area towards the back track. And they notice they can feel, they can feel the skunk was not far. Actually it was, actually gaining ground this time, because he's big not as small as them.

Therefore they decided that they must look a place where they make a stand against the giant skunk. So the wise, wise animals they say, “We have to make a stand, we can't just exhaust ourselves and let him pick us up one by one.” We must stand together while we still have a strength, and we must choose the right place to make a stand. So it was agreed by all animals, there were caribous, there were moose, there were many others. Except that there was only one, one extraordinary animal that was not around, this was a bob cat. And usually this the bob cat was very,very big. At that time there was a by freak of nature, that he was more like a giant bob cat. So they called him a large cat. In our language it's mishipiishiiw something to describe like a lion the king of the cats.

So in our territory the bob cat was considered to be the same level and status as a lion in Africa. So therefore, that's way they decided to stop and dismount and reach it.

Because bob cats usually stayed in there, but seems the bob cat do not travel far. And always hang around in the tree section. They found such a place, they found mountain valleys where there are lots of trees. And also long large narrow lake at the end of it which has an natural open water, because the spring water it doesn't freeze during the winter. So they stopped here, and surveyed the area. And those who were ahead of them they said, "This will be all right." So the wolverine and all the wise animals they say, "Ye this is the good place." They talked about what they would need, and how they would attack the giant skunk.

So they decided where the outlet of the lake ,where there's a tall pine trees long leaning trees. Would be a good place where our giant brother to jump from, to jump at the giant skunk. This is their plan the attacking plan. And that's someone has to because the giant skunk is a gentlemen behaviour also he need a coaxing he won't just attack. They know that, so someone has to be nutty enough, or something to make a wise crack that would cause the giant skunk to be irritated and get him to attack. It's something like a gentlemen of England. When they are insulted their honor they would throw down their white gloves on the ground, and make a date for a for the duel. And that's sort of thing, that nature.

So therefore they have planned everything, all they do now is just wait for him. So they know he is going to come from their trail. So they go to the west which is exactly where the length, the length of the lake is. They know he is going to step on the ice. And in order to find out that he's coming closer, somebody has to be on guard all the time, in in a daytime and also at nighttime.

What they did, was they they place some animals along the lake, with the hole on the ice.

So whenever the giant skunk is walking they would see this this water moving up and down. So this is one, that is one of the way the the animals understand there are some enemies or threat is nearby. When they live under the ice or on top of the ice. So this is the system they used. So they agreed everybody has to be ready. And at the same time they hunt and maintain their life, life has to go on the same even if there's a danger of being killed or extinguished all all of them. So it's a life and death stand they make.

Sure enough the next day there was there was a yell says, "The giant skunk is on the ice." Can't see him yet, because the the length of the lake is so far, all you can see both sides is the mountain in between you don't see anything. But they know he's on the ice now. So everybody prepared, they send the children away as far as they can. Made camp out there and let them wait, and only the male animals stay around.

Sure enough time passes, and in the middle of the lake appears a speck, a dark object. And there he was giant skunk heading towards the end of the lake. It took time because as we know the skunk doesn't jump and hop but rather wiggle it's way around. They know that its going to take time before he gets there, so they plan and they plan and they plan and everything.

So they have sent a message to their brother bob cat to be ready when he's called to be on to be on the scene. He had agreed but true to his nature, leaders where they are living

he didn't want to come here for nothing he says, "Call me when you need me." So the animals, foxes and all that wolf and wolverines and caribous and what have you on the land. They are all gathered together all the schemes world and all the plans are in place and everything, proper timing and everything.

Finally the giant skunk came too close sure threatening and seeing, but it's a life and death decision that they have made. But the skunk also have decided that he's not going to go down without fighting. He has to keep his status that's the most important. So he came, sure enough as usual he he greeted the animals respectively as he does. And so is the rest at least at the beginning, but one remark he made was that, "I was just wondering" he says, "Why in the heck do you have to make such a terrible travel trail?" He was now propping or trying to create an argument to give an excuse to attack, but one of them all ready had plans to answer, so it's a wolverine.

So the wolverine says, "Well we had seen the track of the, there is a name there is a nasty name about somebody who has a cheek, pouch cheek, something like that pouch cheek. Well they have seen the tracks of the pouch cheek that's why the trail is so difficult. So the skunk says, "Who is this pouch cheek, who is this pouch cheek that you mention?". And then wolverine says, "It's a giant skunk, a giant skunk that's what the pouch cheek is".

And that's all the giant skunk needed. Then he slowly turned around ready to aim and let go of his killing (long pause, L.Bird made a small sound with his mouth). And at the same time all the animals just jump in their position. And then wolverine was instructed that he must jump at the skunk right in the rear end where this spray is going to come from ,that was his job, because wolverine has a very sharp and powerful teeth. So everybody knows that he will be the only sort of a person who will be able to hold off the stink or the spray, otherwise everybody will go blind and die.

So it happens so quickly. The wolverine has to jump and close to the opening. And in the meantime, the meantime they have to jump at the skunk to try to try to kill it. So once the wolverine jump in on the position or defense purpose all the rest of the animals jumped on the giant skunk.

Those who have teeth, and those who are able to use any equipment or or any tools begin to attack the giant skunk, but without much damage. But in the mean time the wolverine has to hang on in all his might to hold off the giant skunk. And it was this time nobody can even do any damage to the giant skunk. Nobody explained exactly how big the giant skunk was, must of been bigger that a moose or anything. So finally they said, "We can't do, can't do any damage much", even the wolverine managed to say a few words from his position and he says, "Come on do something I can't hold off this for ever."

So they said, finally they decide. "We should call on our brother giant lynx, bob cat". Even the ordinary lynx couldn't do much damage. So they call this a giant bob cat to come and assist him. But true to this bob cat behaviour it took a long time to come across the lake where he was living. Half way through he has to sit down, because he has cramps on his legs. Finally he approach and he says, "Why in the heck do you have to bother me in my afternoon nap."

So they said, "We have this giant skunk here, see, we can't do anything with it, and

if he lets go of this guy then that's it we have it.” So finally he says, “See”, so the bob cat climbed on the big tree where they had chosen and then they he jumped on the giant skunk neck, he began to work on him with his teeth and his claws everything he has.” Took a long time, finally the effect took place on the giant skunk. Plus the other wounds that he received from the minor animals. He began to sink on his front paws and the rear ends finally he feel limp and he died.

So the other animals won, they cheered they screamed they jumped. But the wolverine was still in there hanging on, finally they said , “He's dead you can let go.” But due to the pressure was there naturally, when the wolverine pulled away some of the spray goes right into his face through his garment and everything. And he turned blind he couldn't see and he was suffering just screaming, and just twisting in the ground, and couldn't do anything. So he beg and he says, “Take me into the water hole so I can wash my eyes.” They said, “No, no, you can't do that because your're going to pollute the water.” And he was suffering, finally the suffering begin to subside a little bit, but he still couldn't see.

So the animal's wives they say, “We can't allow you to wash to wash you at the lake because if you do the water is going to be polluted, and the humans who will come to existence later may not be able to survive and so is the rest of us.” So the wolverine says, “What am I going to do?”, “Well”, they said, “You should go and wash your body into the large body of water which existed towards where we came from so that is due east.” So he says, so he said, “Point me towards it.” So they said “Yes, we will point you towards it and keep travelling until you hit the water and then wash.” And then they pointed at him towards east and then instructed him what ever you come into a stumble into, ask to it where its located to keep your faith up, so you don't give up. It will tell you exactly were we are, how far the water is and that will keep you going so it happens.

Now we're going back to the scene of the of the slaughter there lay the giant skunk, and wolverine have left all ready. So the wise animals talked about it and all that stuff, and then they said, “We must cut him to pieces.” The usual thing was that to burn it or whatever it is or cook it or eat it. So what they decided to do is that whatever left of it, if they don't eat it all, and then the rest of it they have to cut it in pieces to the size of the skunk today. So they cut it that small piece, small piece of each, each part of this animal and then they scatter it all over the land. Around them, they carried it here and there where they usually a skunk make a den, and then they said, “This is where he is going to inhabitant the land and this is the size he is going to be when the humans emerge on the land.” And then live, and they went home happy after that. So that is why today, we have the size of the skunk we have, and this is why today we have the skunk to live and wonder only in summer time. That's why the skunk hibernates partially in the winter to be safe from the humans, and for all the rest of the animals that will be required for the human kind.

That's the end of part one of the Giant Skunk. The rest of it we will pick up the key character would be here our friend wolverine who has been pointed to the east to go wash his body. So that he will wash in the in the large body of water which is already which is already, suitable for the purpose and that will be saved for the human being, who much later

they will have a fresh water. So the story ends, that is one example about the legends.

This is the story which related to the idea of evolution. And this story has been very old. There's nothing in there that tells us that there was any human existence.

And also we can go back and look at the story in the beginning. That the giant skunk have a shaman power that he was able to detect anyone that crosses his trail, whether if he's at home or at any other place. And that he has to have a certain kind of a meal to put in, to refresh his memory or to re to re transe his detection power. Seems the way he ate helped him to increase his awareness his keenness. And that all other animals are naturally afraid of skunks, it's spray, it's pain full to any animal. It tells us all those things, most dramatically is that they prepared for the human to become to exist later. That is the very part of this legend, and thank you for listening. We shall talk about things on the other side, probably, an incubix, which also talks about coming of the human times. Thank you.