

Turning the Tide

At the time of this occurrence, the wolf was in control of the tide. He always kept it at high water mark. The people that lived near Shusharti Bay could not dig for clams or take mussels from the rocks. It was winter and their salmon and berry supply was getting low. Hunger stalked the village.

The winter winds blew strong. The people were crouched around warm fires in their lodges. "I don't know how we're going to get the wolf to change the tide for us," they said to one another.

Then the deer spoke. "I have an idea," he said. "I have an idea. We are all hungry. Everyone in the village is hungry. So this is my plan. I am going to pretend I am dead. Put me in a box and I will have with me the sharpest mussel-shell knife you've got. Tomorrow you

can mourn me. Say, 'The deer is dead now. He had been hungry for a long time.' Then you will see what I will do."

The next day the people spread the story, "The big buck deer has died of hunger. He starved to death." They made him a cedar box held together with pegs made with strong wood from the yew tree. The deer got in the box, and the people carried it to the edge of the clearing. The clearing was close enough to the village so that the people could see if Deer needed help. They left the cover of the box open about seven centimeters on one side, then went back to their doorways to watch.

The wolf was hungry too. It was not long before rumor reached him that Deer had died. He went to investigate and the scent brought him to the box that Deer was in. The deer heard the big wolf outside and his little heart went tic-tic-tic.

Wolf sniffed around the box. "It smells like a deer in there," he said to himself. "Oh boy, this will be my supper."

Now the wolf used his tail instead of his paws for some things, and he pushed his tail through the narrow opening and felt with it all around the inside of the box.

"There's a deer in there alright," he was thinking, when quickly Deer sliced off the wolf's tail in one clean stroke. Wolf was so shocked he ran home as fast as he could go. He

was disappointed that he had missed such a satisfying meal.

Deer climbed out of the box and took the wolf's tail back to the village. "The wolf will be back for his tail," he announced, holding it up for all to see. Then he hung it over the fire.

It was not long before a lone wolf came into the village and appeared at the door of the deer's house. "I have come for the tail of my brother," he stated.

"Before we give you your brother's tail, you must make us a promise," the deer answered. "We want you to let the tide go out so that we can dig clams."

Wolf thought for a while, then replied, "We will let the tide go down so that you can get mussels off the rocks."

"We cannot live only on mussels," the deer replied. "We want clams." He lowered the bushy wolf's tail a little toward the fire. The fire leaped at the tail but did not quite reach it. The tail started becoming black from the smoke.

Wolf ran back to the pack and told his brother what the deer had said. Soon he was back. "We will let the tide out for one day so that you can have a good feed of clams," he said. "Then we will bring it back to the high water mark."

"We don't want to have the tide out for just one day," retorted the deer, lowering the wolf tail a little closer to the flames. "We want it to

go out every day." The smell of singed fur filled the lodge.

Wolf hurried off again. It was not long before he was back. "My brother, the leader of the wolves, whose tail it is you have, said that in return for his tail we will allow the tide to go out twice a day. Every six hours it will change."

The villagers were happy then. Deer returned the blackened tail, and the wolf disappeared into the forest. He could hear some of the people shouting after him, "If you break your promise you will all get your tails cut off." After that there was plenty of food in the village.